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# MIRAGE

# MIRAGE

# MIRAGE

By

WILLIAM H. KOFOED

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To
My Mother
And Father

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# MIRAGE

# CHAPTER I

## A CAPACITY FOR BEING LED ASTRAY

The door was ajar. Night breezes, chasing up and down the mountain-side, darted through the opening and teased the flame in the green-shaded lamp. Shadows billowed around the room.

Vacillating though the light was, it served to reveal, with more or less distinctness, two hands encircling a silver goblet.

The hands were interesting. Long, lean, tanned but not rough, they extended out of the darkness and into the yellow glow, with the goblet lying in the cup of them. Their tendons, marked in bas relief, suggested hidden strength. Plainly these hands were made to labor. That they had not labored was apparent by the skin's softness.

The owner of the hands sat quietly in shadow. Five minutes were born and died. The hands stirred slightly. A voice jarred the silence.

"Sometimes I feel as though this goblet were a part of me. I wonder why?" It seemed that the hands had spoken.

A sound barely audible crept from a remote corner. "M—m."

"I wonder why, Jim?" This time there was directness in the query.

"It was your father's," said Jim, in his old, cracked voice.

"Yes; but so was this shack and the mine and everything. I don't feel the same about them, although of course I do cherish them on his account. Anyway, he's been dead a quarter of a century. And heaven knows I remember little enough about him, except that his beard was wooly, and that he carried himself as tradition always painted the Barclays."

"Twenty-five years, come spring," mumbled Jim.

"I had just passed four when it happened." The hands caressed the silver goblet.

"M—m," mused Jim.

Again silence. Capricious breezes danced through the open door and the light flickered almost out.

"Jim!"

"W'at?"

"Bring the other lamp—the large one."

There was a stir in the corner and a shuffling across the floor. A shadow went slowly into the adjoining room. When it returned it was no longer a shadow but a weazened old Hopi Indian bearing a light.

Darkness fled; even the dried out log walls were visible now. Visible also was the figure of Hugh Barclay, who sat slouched on the edge of a chair, the silver goblet still in his hands.

He was rather tall—one could see that in spite of his position—and broad around the

shoulders, but tapering down at waist and legs like a thoroughbred. In common with his hands, his body gave an impression of strength—strength that lay dormant in wiry muscles strength subsidized by a langorous will strength held in abeyance by lack of desire.

At Barclay's back loomed a bookcase which he and Jim Montana invariably regarded with pride, for bookcases are not commonly found in the Arizona Rockies. It was atop this piece of furniture Jim placed the newly lighted lamp.

The Hopi yawned. "Sleep," he said, suggestively, "makes white men strong an' fit to travel."

No answer.

"Tomorrow you vamos, eh?" Jim's words were more in the nature of a declaration than a question—a declaration that contained a note of protest.

Barclay nodded, abstractedly.

"You go when? At the rise of the sun?"

Another nod.

"M—m. Whyn't you sleep, then, 'stead of hugging that Tinaja?" Jim was not strong on similies. The most deprecating thing he could think of to call the offending goblet was a water-jar. "Sleep! Desert traveling no cinch. You know that."

Still no answer. The old Indian grew querulous. No doubt he felt that by right of extended service he should be allowed to grow as querulous as he pleased.

"I wish you would not go to the East." His pent-up protest broke forth. "Stay 'nother year—two year—here in Arizonac."

Hugh had spent a total of four of the past fifteen years at home (he still called the mountain-shack home). In the interval he had secured a college education, had toured the world so many times that his friends came to look upon him as a cosmopolite, and had striven, earnestly enough but with a tremendous capacity for being led astray, to enter

upon a business or professional career for which he might, by chance, be adapted. He hadn't found that career; and in the end had suddenly quit the whirl—so suddenly, in fact, that he surprised not only his friends but himself as well. With a cynical smile on his lips but joy in his heart, he had "journeyed back to nature," there to rest in contentment throughout two perfect summers, while Jim Montana worked what remained of the elder Barclay's silver mine. Then had come Allan Scott's letters; letters inviting the Arizonian East for an indefinite stay; letters chiding, insistent. And now Hugh was going back again—back into the whirl—and clearly his Indian helper disapproved.

But Hugh failed to hear Jim's mutterings.

"What," said he, irrelevantly, "what was my mother's maiden name?" The goblet had suggested this thought.

Jim shuffled to a chair and seated himself very deliberately before replying.

"Never have I heard it," said the Hopi, briefly. "Your father called her Cherry."

"I know he called her Cherry. That is all I do know." And he added, in a voice of mingled wistfulness and exasperation: "Oh, why was it that both of them should die——"

Jim, in his corner, kept silent. These moods were no new thing with Hugh: brooding over the silver goblet invariably brought them on. But Jim, being a faithful servant, understood Barclayian moods and acted accordingly. Not for nothing had the Hopi lived his life in the mountain-shack. Not for nothing had Hugh grown to the fledgling stage and beyond under Jim Montana's wing.

Barclay continued his arraignment of Fate, vigorously decrying its unkindness to him.

For Hugh was inordinately proud of his parents, particularly of his father; not because of that dim personage's mineral discoveries, nor yet again because of any distinct character attributes—the most obvious of these he could

barely bring to mind—but rather because the elder Barclay was descended from a line of Southern blue-bloods whose ante-bellum social activities had placed them, at that time, among the first families of Virginia. And Hugh's travels abroad had strengthened this pride in his progenitors.

The Arizonian made another tack.

"But my mother! Who was she?"

"He went," said Jim, "to San Francisco to marry her."

"I'll wager she was a patrician of the Golden Gate."

"Mebbe," said Jim in a manner clearly indicating his ignorance of the term patrician.

Barclay put the goblet from him. "I'd like to know who she was," he murmured; and leaned back in his chair.

Submerged in his reflections, he allowed another quarter-hour to drift by. That was his way: to scorn time.

With the passing minutes, his mind turned

from the goblet to other things; for, on the eve of his departure, Hugh had grown reminiscent.

"I was out in the desert today," he remarked, directing attention, with a careless thumb, to the steep slope of the mountain and all that lay beyond.

Jim accepted the fact without replying.

"And I saw another mirage," continued Barclay.

"Sky-picture?"

"Yes; there was the town of Red Dog, right-side-up, floating in thin air above the horizon. It was a splendid reproduction. That's twice I've observed the same phenomenon within a month."

"Twice?" pondered the Indian, holding up two fingers.

"Twice," admitted Hugh. "To see it again is equivalent to a curse from on high; at least, so the Moquis of Red Dog have it."

Montana nodded and frowned. Yes, the

handful of Indians in Red Dog had circulated that belief, and no doubt it was well founded in truth. Jim could not say with certainty; yet, true or false, they certainly did not deserve the epithet of Moqui. Why, that was equal to calling an Italian nobleman a dago! The Indians of Red Dog were not Moquis; they were Hopis, like Jim and all the rest of the ancient and honored tribe. Jim was hurt by the unintended suggestion of inferiority. But he held his tongue and let it pass.

"That picture in the sky," continued Hugh, "brought back to me my quest of a profession. I saw in myself the desert wanderer pursuing mirages. I saw the figure that was me stumbling through the sand, reaching out toward a thing not real, pushing on and on in search of water, while at my very feet flowed the stream I sought. I couldn't see it for looking, you know. My eyes were on the mirage—always have been on the mirage, and always

will be, I guess. It's my damned capacity for being led astray."

"And the stream—w'at's that stand for?" wondered the Hopi. Jim liked young Barclay's imaginings and followed them with unusual ease for an Indian.

"The stream? Oh, that's my talents. Every lazy fool in the world has talents. It's not having them that counts; it's knowing what to do with them. Mine are going to waste—flowing right by me. Perhaps, some day, a clever engineer will come along and turn the stream in its course. Then I'd fall in, and find myself."

That was a little involved, but Jim caught the essence of it. "Yes," he admitted, "you should go to work—you should do something."

"That's the drawback of having plenty of money and being free to do as one wills. It isn't good for a man. Maybe I shall follow your advice, Jim, and hunt something to do—

when I reach the East. Allan Scott might help me. He's in business now. The Scott Galleries—objects d' art and antiques! Sounds funny to a person who knows Allan and his easy going ways. Yet I believe he is making money. It's all in finding yourself, Jim."

"Can't you work without going so far 'way?" The weazened old Indian was always perturbed at the thought of Hugh's departure.

"Yes, of course. But don't get the impression that I am going East to work. Not I. Scotty has invited me, and Scotty must see to it that I enjoy myself. And pleasure, you know, is the very antithesis of work."

"Is it?" said Jim. He did not know, now, what Hugh was talking about.

"It is with me," qualified Hugh. And, after a pause, added: "Because I haven't found myself."

Jim said: "I've got a funny w'at-a-you-call-

'em feeling that something's going to happen——"

"To me?" The gleam in Hugh's eyes seemed to fade and dissolve and light up again beneath lids that squinted in spite of themselves. Night breezes, cooler and more penetrating, came in at the door.

"M—m. To you," mumbled the Indian. "Don't go 'way, Hugh——"

"Why?" laughed Barclay, rising and stretching his long, lean arms above his head. "Do you imagine it's my capacity for being led astray that's calling me?"

Jim sat in dejection, no answer upon his withered lips. The light on the bookcase flickered several times, and its gleam was caught by the rounded wall of the silver goblet. Hugh detected the reflection; whereupon his mind relinquished its hold on extraneous thoughts and again came back to the chalice which was once his father's.

"It's peculiar: how this thing dominates

me," he mused, fondling it. "One might think it were alive."

"All things live," said Jim, unexpectedly.

Barclay was startled. "Even inanimates?" he shot back.

"M—m. Even—w'at you said."

Hugh regarded his Indian helper with curiosity. "What makes you look on this goblet as a live thing?" he persisted. Surely the Hopi was not aware of the scientific theory of atomic motion.

Jim thought a moment, then wagged his head. "Dunno," he admitted. "It's Hopi religion."

"At that, I guess you're pretty near right," muttered Hugh, staring intently at the silver goblet where it lay in his hands. He was, for the moment, lost to his surroundings. A wave of cool air blew into the room. The light sank low. Young Barclay shook himself. "Good night, Jim," he called out, and went toward bed, bearing his father's relic with him.

## BEING LED ASTRAY

Jim Montana got up stiffly and with difficulty and closed the door.

## CHAPTER II

### ELEANOR

Eleanor Gage was a spoiled child of the Great God Beauty. Destiny had given her lips that were red and kissable, hair that proved a greater lure to men than gold, and eyes that rivalled the deeps of Lake Tahoe. Yet she was spoiled. She had learned to love her beauty above everything.

Society matrons from Washington to Long Branch admitted, in the presence of their men folk, that she was a dear; but when the men had gone, subtle gazes were exchanged and upturned noses became question marks. For it would have been more than human for these ladies to really like a girl who attracted masculine hearts as easily as Eleanor did.

Those who knew her intimately called her

irresponsible, but to calmly delineate a girl's character as irresponsible, in no way frees her from the obligations that are a part of life, nor does it excuse a misuse of one's powers. Eleanor's supreme power—her only power, some said—lay in her beauty.

One man alone, of the many she had met, failed to fall beneath the spell of her beauty. And that man was not, strictly speaking, a member of the society in which she moved. In a way, he was well known among the elite; but only "in a way." Had she been a bit more snobbish, she might have designated him "a mere shop-keeper: a dealer in paintings and antiques," although **he** always assumed the role of an artist. But she was not so inclined. She preferred to overlook this; which was rather unexpected of Eleanor Gage, in view of the fact that none of her contemporaries were more ardent believers in caste than she.

They—Eleanor and Allan Scott—had been introduced at a dance some weeks previous.

No doubt it was one of his patrons who had introduced them. A pretty, brown-haired girl was clinging to his arm at the time. Eleanor distinctly remembered that girl—with her shyly adoring eyes and innocent features—and was instantly aware of a feeling of dislike for the little stranger.

Mr. Scott had eyes for no one but the clinging girl, whom he called Olive. Eleanor wondered what he saw in her. "It's a shame," she had commented to herself, "that such a handsome, jolly fellow should throw himself away on this ordinary person." And then she had done her best—her level best—to save him from the brown-haired girl. And for the first time Eleanor had met defeat. She had it forced upon her then that the way to Allan lay not in direct attack upon him, but through the girl Olive.

So she had cultivated Olive.

Up to the time of the dance that brought Eleanor and Allan Scott together, Eleanor

was reported to have favored one John James Fiske, a sportily inclined individual whose escapades were meat to starving society editors. But never was a weather vane in the midst of storm more mutable than the charming Miss Gage. The coming of Allan saw the exit of Mr. Fiske. It was another case of "the king is dead, long live the king!" except that the king wasn't really dead, and might, at any moment, get up and walk.

John James suffered not at all. In fact, it is doubtful if he was conscious of being superseded. Even had he known, he would not have worried. He was not the kind to worry about anything.

So, for the moment, Eleanor rid her mind of Johnny Fiske, and promptly and easily installed Allan in his stead.

The really sad part of it was that Allan gave evidence of being tied to Olive Henderson's apron strings.

Eleanor was thinking of this now as she dawdled with her hand-mirror.

Kimona-clad, she sat on a slender, cane-backed chair, and gazed fondly at her own blue eyes in the mirror. Masses of blonde hair, still in slumber's disarray, fell about her shoulders. Bare feet peeped from beneath flowered silk.

Except for the clock in the hall below chiming the hour of ten, the great house was wrapped in a morning silence. Father, of course, had started for the bank half an hour before. And mother was with her maid.

Here, then, was a splendid opportunity for self communion; and doubtless Eleanor would have made the most of it had not the phone bell on her private wire suddenly set up an insistent tinkling.

She drew her chair to the dainty tabourette on which the instrument rested.

"Yes; this is Miss Gage—this is Eleanor. . . . Who? . . . Ah, yes. Good morn-

ing, dear! For the moment I failed to place you. I am so sleepy. Really, my eyes aren't more than half open. . . . How is Allan? . . . Good! I am awfully glad. . . . A friend visiting him, you say? . . . A man from Arizona?"

There was a prolonged pause in Eleanor's chatter, during which the much-cultivated Olive, from her end of the wire, explained that Allan's college comrade, lone scion of the once-famous Barclay family, had come East for an indefinite stay, and that it was Allan's duty, and pleasure as well, to see that his friend's time was not irksomely spent.

As the conversation advanced, Eleanor's eyes lost their softness and warmth and into them came a haughty light. "I can see," she said to herself, "where I have another stranger thrust upon me." And, woman-like, she was inclined to blame Olive for it.

"We—Mr. Barclay, Allan, and I—are going to the Arts and Crafts ball tomorrow

night," concluded Olive. "And we thought perhaps you wouldn't mind going with us."

The irony of it! To be fed to a stranger, and Allan, in the company of the other girl, looking on!

Eleanor's first thought was to voice a curt refusal, and to hang up and have done with the whole miserable affair. This was what one got for mingling with social inferiors, anyway. But a semblance of Allan rose before her, and she rejected her first thought, wondering, the while, what it was that attracted her so strongly to the youthful dealer in antiques. Usually she had only to cast her eyes upon a man and that man followed her. It had not been so with Allan. Perhaps that was why she liked him. He seemed so out of reach.

"Wouldn't mind going? Why, I'd be delighted to go, my dear," said Eleanor, deceptively smooth. "Who is this gentleman—this Mr. Barclay?"

And Olive answered: "Surely you've heard

of the Virginia Barclays. They've been written into history. Their immense fortune and the lives of every son but one—and there were seven—went into the cause of the Confederacy. Several years after the war, the one surviving member of the family wandered West, and became a prospector, and discovered a gold mine or silver mine or something in the Arizona Rockies. It is his son, Hugh, who is staying with Allan."

"But what is he like? He is not one of those rough and ready story-book Westerners, is he?"

"No, no. I think you'd call him a gentleman of leisure, but he's nice," observed Olive, simply. "Sometimes he is very quiet, though he has his garrulous periods—at least, so Allan tells me. From what I know of him, I should describe him as intellectual—lazily intellectual."

"Fine. Then I shall play intellectual," de-

cided Eleanor, and, with a soft "good-bye, dear," hung the receiver upon its hook.

Imperiously, she summoned her maid, and began to dress.

She was quite disagreeable all morning.

## CHAPTER III

### THE MAN FROM ARIZONA

They sat on a gilded sofa, partially screened from the ball-room floor by two palms and a massive balcony pole. The man was so placed that he could look through the palms and out at the dancers. This he did—occasionally; the remainder of his time he spent gazing into the irresponsible blue eyes of the girl beside him and wondering how the deuce a person could be so distractingly pretty.

Moved by the charm of her eyes he began to speak.

"I love this life so very much," he said, without pausing to consider the substance of his discourse, "that when I die——"

"Yes?" she pretended to hang upon his words. "What will you do?"

He looked at her abstractedly. "Now, that's

strange. I haven't the faintest idea what I'll do. Have you?"

"Swear, perhaps." It seemed a suitable suggestion for a Westerner.

"Perhaps," he agreed, and looked between the palms. Came to him the plaintive notes of a Hawaiian love song, the swish of gowns, and the sound of a thousand slippers gliding over the polished floor. He was interested. He tried surveying the scene through half-closed lids, as though dimming the vision added enchantment. The magnificence of the hall, its frescoed walls and ceilings, its balconies and boxes wherein had sat, in stiff nonchalance, year after year, the society folk of the city, held his attention but for a moment. It was the swaying mass of men and women that claimed him. He saw them metamorphose into rough cowboys, into slovenly-clad squaws, into greasy, painted Indians gone mad over a snake dance, and, finally, saw them

change back into the trim and neat little people they were.

"What a dreamer you must be!" sounded a soft voice in his ear.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," said the man, contritely. "It's a miserable habit of mine."

"What? Dreaming?"

"Yes."

"That depends on what you're dreaming of." She moved closer to him, under pretext of rearranging the filmy folds of her dress, and he felt her lithe shoulders touching his own. A peculiar thrill surged through him. He turned and beheld, with rising pleasure, her mass of blonde hair, her blue eyes.

"The ukalale tunes are quite entrancing—quite." He spoke as though he had brought forward for consideration a very interesting scientific fact. His voice was level, and cool, and his face impassive; but his eyes glowed as they must have glowed in a thousand generations of Barclays about to fall in love. Warn-

ingly, they seemed to say: "I know the evening has been a dull one for you, Miss Gage, but if you try to liven it up by flirting, I'm liable to meet you more than half way."

She smiled at him. "Tell me about the West—about Arizona, Mr. Barclay."

"Really, I know nothing of the place. I only live there."

She laughed: a rippling, practiced laugh.

The conversation seemed about to lag. She rescued it.

"Have you lived there all your life?"

"Hardly that." And he told her of the eight years he had spent at preparatory school and college in the East, and of his good friend Allan Scott, who, for old times' sake, had invited him out of the wilds.

"Allan is a splendid fellow," said Miss Gage, enthusiastically.

"None better."

"I am sure I hope he makes a success of his

business venture," continued the girl. She had struck a subject that appealed to her.

"I know he will. Allan never fails."

"When you speak so decisively, I begin to share your confidence."

"Good. I want you to."

The music had ceased, but the dancers, standing where the last note had found them, stormed for more. Overwhelmed by this burst of applause, the tired orchestra acknowledged defeat by turning again to its instruments.

The man's attention was engaged by these manoeuvers until he became aware of Miss Gage speaking.

"I wish you would tell me of your home in Arizona, and your life out there. I am so interested in the West."

"I'll try," Barclay agreed. "But I'm afraid I'm a failure at that sort of thing. My statistics are wretched, and as for a personal knowledge of the state—well, as I said, I came away before I had reached the age of fourteen, and

stayed away until I had been handed my degree. Not because I wanted to stay away—don't misunderstand me; I love the place—but my vacations were spent abroad; and then, you see, I had very little reason for going back."

"But you did go back——"

"Yes, of course. Off and on."

"Then surely you gathered impressions—"

"Oh, lots. My brain tissues are made of wax. Impressions are all they hold. Would you believe it if I told you that I have a collection of first class impressions left over from childhood?"

"Certainly I'd believe it. And I would ask you to tell me them—all of them. Will you?"

"You are hard to refuse. You put things so nicely."

"Then don't refuse me."

Hugh was looking into space. He appeared quite detached from the material present. "One of the first of my mental engravings,"

he began, "reveals a desert—a desert that spreads out, endlessly, on all sides—a desert dipping and undulating as the ocean does when whipped into action. With every breath of air the alkali dust rises in little, swirling clouds, only to subside and rise again. The whole arid plain is stubbed with mesquite and cactus; but off toward the north and west, half hidden in a purple haze, the mesas rear their heads. In spite of the white sun-glare and blue sky, it is a solemn landscape. That was the scene I looked upon when I said good-bye to Arizona fifteen years ago. Kid-like, I cried. I don't know why I cried. I suppose it was due to the impression these things made on me. I had to cross that desert, donkey-back, before I connected with my train."

"What a perfectly wonderful description!"

The man flushed, as though suddenly realizing that, under the influence of a pair of pretty eyes, and quite against his will, he had allowed himself to grow eloquent.

"And what is impression number two?" Miss Gage pursued.

"That is a picture of my home," said Barclay, returning a bit reluctantly to his subject, but rapidly becoming immersed in it. "West of the table-lands lies a spur of the Rockies. There is snow on the top; it covers the highest peaks like a white blanket draped over the foot of one's bed. We were perched half-way up the mountain-side, in a big log bungalow. Dad was very particular about our quarters. I remember the pride he took in a bookcase that was shipped all the way from Chicago. But of course such minor details don't interest you."

"But they do. Please go on." She was beginning to like his talk.

He continued:

"Dad, you know, was a Virginia Barclay, but that is neither here nor there. He became a miner. He prospected the ranges of half a dozen states before striking Arizona. At

that time, he was chock full of experience, but his pockets were empty. Down in Gila he made friends with a Hopi Indian—a pretty intelligent chap. Before long the Hopi got to boasting about his ancestors. The ancient tribes, it seems, were highly civilized: mined and smelted silver, tilled the soil, lived in new and approved ways, and all that sort of thing. Dad listened to the redskin's 'big talk,' and when he had finished, slapped him on the back and agreed that the nations of today should curb their self-pride. But all the while the Indian had been talking, dad had been thinking, and for once his thoughts were diverted from gold to silver. Lucky deviation! It resulted in his quitting the growing ranks of gold seekers that swarmed over the West; and thereafter he sought silver. The Hopi went with him on all prospecting tours. They were pards now: slept together, worked together, ate together. And together they discovered the metal of their dreams in that spur of the

Rockies behind the mesa. Dad went to San Francisco and married, but returned with a smelting outfit and tools with which to build a house. The Indian lived in the house with us, lived through the death of my mother and father, and still lives there, while I spend the money he digs from the ground."

The man stopped, and looked again at the girl by his side. Her eyes were veiled in a dreamy haze, as though the romance of this tale had found a sympathetic heart. Impatiently, Barclay wonder what stimulus had caused him to divulge personal history instead of the impressions he had promised.

Eleanor sighed.

"Arizona must be a place of enchantment," she murmured, somewhat irrelevantly, Barclay thought.

"It is." Again he was the blase cosmopolite. "For historic and scenic picturesqueness there isn't a land that can approach it."

"And you led me to believe you were de-

plorably ignorant of your home state," she chided.

"I am. What have I told you? . . . Not much of anything."

The Hawaiian love tune dwindled off into nothingness. The dancers, reluctantly departing from the arena of their activity, dropped into convenient seats beneath the balconies. Ladies waved feathery fans. Perspiring gentlemen searched the pockets of their evening clothes for elusive handkerchiefs.

Two figures, arm in arm, came across the floor toward the sequestered couple. Hugh saw them, and arose. Eleanor averted her gaze.

A moment later Allan Scott and Olive Henderson had descended upon the bower. Their heads, very close together, pushed through the palm leaves; and Olive said, laughingly: "It is growing late, folkses. I think we had better go, don't you?"

But the man from Arizona had a happy in-

spiration. "Let us," said he, who was in the flush of his first evening with the beautiful Miss Gage, "let us go up to the roof. The cabaret, they say, is excellent. A bit of lobster, a glass of champagne . . ."

The expected response failed to materialize. A silence fell upon the little group. Dimly ill at ease, Hugh glanced from one to the other. Allan and the beautiful Miss Gage were looking at Olive, whose face was flushed and whose eyes were full of unnamed fear.

"Not—not the roof?" queried Hugh. It was borne in upon him that he had said something distinctly out of place. He wondered what it could have been.

"Please—no," pleaded Olive, in a low voice. And without further discussion they moved toward the cloak rooms.

Eleanor lagged behind, and explained.

"The Hendersons," she whispered, "are very middle class. They keep lodgers—two lodgers; or at least, there were two until the

affair of last month. One, a morose old man, grew into an absinthe lover. He drank by himself, and over-did the thing, you know. The night came when he went suddenly mad . . . Shot himself in the mouth. The papers were full of it. Since then, I suppose Olive has been dreadfully afraid of liquor. . . . And she's an obstinate little person. You couldn't budge her now, really."

Hugh said that his allusion to champagne was rather unfortunate. He wouldn't have done it had he known the story. But Eleanor laughed at his being sorry for such a thoroughly appropriate suggestion; and they separated to get their wraps.

The incident of Olive's objection to the roof garden passed quickly and completely out of Hugh's memory. He was possessed, that night, of an unusual buoyancy. Miss Gage was wine enough for him. Viewing her—and simply viewing her—was equal to a Bacchic feast.

The girls, half hidden in voluminous white furs, reappeared. Once more the party set off, this time down the great stone staircase that led from the hotel lobby to the street.

They paused beneath the striped canopy extending across the sidewalk, while an obsequious porter was sent scurrying for a taxi-cab.

"Millionaire for a night," prated Allan, thumping his chest. "Tomorrow you'll find me selling Chippendale chairs and old cameos."

A taxi whizzed recklessly around the corner and came to a standstill at the opposite end of the canopy. Marvelling at this vicious driving, Hugh glanced at the chauffeur, who, in turn, stared insolently down at him. He was a massive, animal-like fellow — pleasant enough when things went right, no doubt, but tortured now with a grouch. . . .

The porter was at the door, helping the ladies to seats within. Reluctantly, Barclay

removed his studious gaze from the man at the wheel, and went into the dark depths of the cab. A word, a tip, and they were dashing down the silent avenue, with the hammering of the motor and the clicking of the taxi-meter for company.

Scott and his little lady were talking in low tones. Hugh turned to Eleanor for a topic of conversation.

"So you are a university man," pondered the blonde beauty. "Good! I just idolize learned men." She was smiling now.

"I never claimed to be learned," Barclay disparaged himself. "Frankly, I am what has been termed an uneducated college graduate."

"Who dared to call you that?" indignantly.

The man from Arizona smothered a chuckle at her ready defense of him.

"Oh, no one in particular," he said. "I heard the phrase somewhere, and applied it to myself."

"Horrid! I won't allow you to depreciate

your value in my eyes. Why do you call yourself an uneducated college man?"

"It must be that I take an abnormal interest in truth. For example, I studied logarithms, yet for the life of me I cannot remember the definition of a mantissa. I have crammed chemistry until it seemed my head must burst with the super-abundance of formulas it contained, yet I have forgotten the formula for sulphuric acid. I have delved into the history of the Venetians from their early rise to their slow decay; and with what result? At this moment, my memory can recall but three things Venetian: gondolas, the Doges Palace, and the Bridge of Sighs. But, transcending even this height of ignorance," here the jest went out of his voice, "I find what little academic knowledge I do retain to be of no market value whatever. The result, as you see, is an occupationless man."

"That," commented Eleanor, tossing her head, "is no disgrace."

"It is in America. It should be everywhere."

"You don't excuse yourself, then?"

"Not at all."

Pause. Noise of motor. Whispering across the way.

Miss Gage broke the silence between them. "And you put the blame on—what?" she asked.

"Dreaming; with not enough initiative to make the dreams realities."

"And yet, knowing the cause and objecting to the result, you go on dreaming?"

"Yes. It's a fascinating way to pass the time."

She looked at him. He knew it by the movement of her white furs.

"You musn't," she said.

"Musn't what?"

"Pander to your appetite for dreams. It—it's so abnormal. It reminds me of the absinthe lover." And then, leaning forward through the darkness of swaying taxi-cab, she added:

"You're not going on, in this way, forever—are you?"

It was well done, this attempt to show personal interest in him, and Hugh, who was a better judge of vast, abstract considerations than of human values, failed to see that she was only practicing her art.

He grew whimsical. "That depends," he told her. "The engineer may come and turn my stream in its course."

Of course she did not know what he was talking about. She said nothing.

"Have you ever lived in the open, Miss Gage?"

"No. And I have no desire to. I prefer the stir of the cities."

"You can't know what I mean, then. Dreaming is a product of the silent places. I've spent two wonderful years out in Arizona, doing nothing, as you put it, but dream. And, do you know, I've come to love life for its dreams alone."

"Is that what you meant—under the balcony—when you told me how very, very much you loved life?" There was a hint of disappointment in her voice.

A flush crawled under the man's tanned cheeks. He felt it mounting.

"Partly," he admitted. He did not want to acquaint her with the fact that already she was one of his dreams.

"Only partly?"

Barclay chewed his lower lip. For an instant he imagined the girl was playing with him, and the thought proved unpleasant. He determined to avoid her conversational trap.

"You don't believe in encouraging fancies, do you?" he quizzed.

"Yes, I do—at night, or after hours. But not as an occupation. That is, not unless you make your dreams realities."

"But that would mean work."

"Of course. And I am afraid you've proven that you need work. Some men can do with-

out it—lots of them in my set don't work, a they're jolly fellows, too. But others——

"Had better dig ditches."

"Not at all. There are the professions, y know." She toyed with her furs, and a lit sound came from her, much like a smothe yawn. She continued: "Down in my he I have always idolized learned men. Univ sity instructors have held a special appeal me; authors, even novelists, I look to in a and philosophers—well, I think——" pause was cleverly handled. "I think I sho like to marry a philosopher."

"That," said Hugh, "is funny."

The taxi stopped. Allan Scott pee through the window.

"Your jumping-off place," he observ nodding to Miss Gage.

"Home so soon!" exclaimed Eleanor. S kissed Olive Henderson, and clasped Alla hand in brief farewell.

The chauffeur opened the door. Hu

stepped to the sidewalk, helping Miss Gage after him.

On the wide, white marble steps of her home, she turned and gave Barclay her hand.

"I have had a perfectly glorious evening." She looked at him as the toying lion must have looked at the mouse; but it was quite dark and he could not see. "You are so interesting, Mr. Barclay."

"Am I?" said Barclay.

"Good night—or should I say good morning?" Her fingers tightened, lingeringly, over his. Then she darted from him, and disappeared through a pair of plate glass doors, leaving behind a faint aroma of mignonette and the echo of pattering footsteps.

Hugh looked vacantly down the broad, deserted street; and a full minute passed before his brain cells had regained sufficient composure to record the sound of the banging and rattling taxi motor.

He came to himself with such a start that he

catapaulted down the steps, across the sidewalk, and into the cab with a speed that was altogether lacking in dignity.

Olive and Allan laughed when he landed among them.

"Why the hurry, 'Clay, old man?" grinned Scott.

"Awfully sorry to have kept you waiting," apologized Hugh.

"But you haven't kept us waiting. I'll wager you weren't out there a minute."

Barclay subsided in a corner of the auto.

When Olive Henderson had been delivered safely home and the taxi was occupied by none but the two chums, Allan threw his arm around Hugh's shoulder, and said: "Now, then, what is your impression of this Miss Gage?"

"So her first name is Eleanor?" mused Barclay.

"It is," Scott assured him.

Hugh paused.

"Well?" queried his friend.

"I was going to say that it was a pretty name and that I liked it," came the reply. "But I was wrong. I haven't thought enough about the name to know whether I like it or not. It's the girl I like."

## CHAPTER IV.

### A PHILOSOPHER IN THE BUD

It was the last stop. Allan lived here, in apartments above the store. The taxi, panting, by the curb, its scowling chauffeur eyeing the two men in evening dress.

"How much, old stick-in-the-mud?" said Allan, gaily.

Avarice gleamed in the eyes of the man at the wheel. He shoved his heavy jaw forward, pugnaciously, and consulted the taxi-meter.

"'Leven dollars and fifty-six cents." He chewed the words as though they were meat. Plainly, his grouch was still with him.

"How? Say that again. Say it slowly."

"'Leven dollars and fifty-six cents." A crimson hue suffused the driver's neck and ears. He was not in the least pretty to look upon.

"I don't mind spending my money—or even

iving it away—but I hate to be robbed," re-
ıarked Allan, as he stepped forward and
ĸamined the meter.

"Eleven dollars for a five mile run, eh?" he
ɔntinued. "That's more than three times the
ɛgitimate rate. I would advise you to make
nother computation, my man. Now, how
ıuch do I owe you?"

"You hearn me. 'Leven dollars and fifty-
ix cents," persisted the robber on the front
ɛat, whose ire was rising higher and higher.

"Come, come. I haven't all night to waste
ılking to you. What——"

The chauffeur exploded. Oaths came with
ıch rapidity as to fairly choke utterance.
ınd he followed his vituperative outburst with
hysical activity that marked him an adherent
f prize-ring methods. Climbing from his
ɛat, he planted a broad, rock-like fist in
ıllan's face. Allan sprawled on the sidewalk.

Hugh Barclay's lazy muscles awoke. A long,
ıiry arm shot out and grasped the chauffeur

by the nape of his bull neck. The neck stiffened, ducked, twisted this way and that, but was held fast.

Barclay spun his opponent like a top; shook him; worried him; held him away and slapped him repeatedly across the cheeks, until those cheeks burned red. The Westerner's strength was no longer dormant, but a thing alive. And he might have continued his aggressions indefinitely, had not brass buttons hove in sight.

The patrolman was smoking a pipe—a sign that pedestrination on the Avenue had reached its lowest ebb—when the sound of a smacking blow startled him out of his pacific mental state. He drew his club and ran toward the swaying two.

"Here, break away!" cried the officer. "What's the big idea? Want me t' run you in?"

Allan Scott had scrambled to his feet. He meant to assist Barclay; but, observing the rather tame termination of the combat, he

turned carelessly toward a little mirror that projected from the wind shield of the taxi-cab, and spent a moment or two in rueful contemplation of his fast-closing right eye.

This apparent indifference to what might be called the seriousness of the situation displeased the policeman.

"Say, what do you think this is, a boodwah?" he inquired, sarcastically.

"Boudoir? Boudoir? Where have I heard that word before?" muttered Allan.

The officer advanced upon Scott, dragging the sullen chauffeur after him. Barclay prepared to restrain the patrolman should he become abusive with his club; but interference was unnecessary, for, in the sputtering light of a nearby arc lamp, merchant and policeman recognized each other.

"Oh-ho, so it's you, Mr. Scott. I beg pardon, sir. I thought——"

"All right, Cassidy. Never mind the apologies. By any freak of chance, do you happen

to have a piece of raw beefsteak in your pocket?"

"You sure do need it, sir," laughed Cassidy. "Some shiner! Is this son-uv-a-gun t' blame fer the damage?"

"He is."

"What shall I do with 'm? Lock 'm up?"

Allan looked at the chauffeur, who was beginning to quake.

"Lemme go. I was wrong. Yuh only owe me t'ree dollars and twenty cents. Lemme go, won't cha? I won't do it again."

"Quite right you won't do it again—especially if another Barclay happens to be riding in your cab at the time," grinned Scott.

The vanquished one lapsed into moody silence.

"Want t' press a charge, Mr. Scott?" This from the officer.

"No. The incident is closed as far as I am concerned. If you feel so inclined, you may as well release the bandit, Cassidy."

It was done.

"Here's fiver, old stick-in-the-mud," added Scott, handing a bill to the chauffeur, who was already climbing back into his seat. "It was worth the difference to see you get the spanking you deserved.'

"T'anks," mumbled the tough specimen, throwing out the clutch and pulling at the lever by his side. A second later he was sputtering down the Avenue.

"Do you know who that guy is?" Cassidy pointed with his club at the departing motor car.

"I didn't know he was anybody in particular," said Allan. "Is he?"

"He's a prize fighter—a beginner wid the gloves. Twice I seen 'm in the prelims down t' the American A. C. His name's Callahan, I think. And, take it from me, he's a comer."

"Then my friend here must have the stuff of champions in him," reasoned Scott, with his hand on Hugh's shoulder. "I take in the

fights occasionally myself, but I never have seen this fellow Callahan. Next time I learn of his getting into action, I'll run down and look him over."

"Maybe I'll see you down there," grinned the officer. "I go often."

Scott reached into his pocket and drew forth a perfecto.

"Here, disinfect your mouth with a good cigar, Cassidy. We must be getting indoors. Bye-bye!" Keys in hand, he headed for the store entrance, Barclay following.

The patrolman put the cigar in his hat and returned the pipe to his mouth. Waving a farewell salute, he proceeded down the Avenue.

The rattle of a passing milk wagon, the squeak of Cassidy's shoes and the soft clump of his rubber heels were the early morning sounds that made their imprint on Barclay's mind as the two chums passed through the opened door.

Back through the shadowy store they went, and up a flight of stairs to the Scott apartments.

Allan spent some time doctoring his eye with salves and other useless and evil smelling stuffs taken from the medicine chest. After which, he scoured around in search of pipes.

"Tired?" he drawled, as they sat and puffed at their briars.

"On the contrary, I am wide awake," said Barclay.

"Our tilt with old stick-in-the-mud stirred you up a little, eh?"

"Somewhat. I am glad the officer happened along when he did. My blood was hot. I wanted to make that Callahan chap suffer. I wanted to see him writhe, and—I know it is a savage desire, but—I wanted him to feel that it lay in my power to increase his hurt. . . ."

Scott was surprised at the repressed intensity of Hugh's feelings, yet refrained from

comment. It meant only that the Westerner's friendship was intense.

They smoked in silence. Hugh gazed through the blue-gray clouds, and essayed to study the room, its piano in one corner, its pictures on the walls; but his attention wandered. Finally he spoke:

"How long have you been acquainted with Miss Gage?"

"Not long. Why?"

"I imagined you two had known each other for years—thought perhaps you had been pals before Olive filled your horizon. You don't mind me speaking of Miss Henderson in this way, do you, Allan?"

"Not at all, 'Clay. I think a great deal of Olive, and I don't mind who knows it. I am proud that I have such a pretty and sensible little girl to monopolize; but as for Eleanor Gage—our acquaintanceship isn't two months old. I met her at a dance. A customer of mine introduced us. Olive was with me at

ıe time; and Miss Gage seemed to take a king to her. They have been chummy ever ince. I don't know why, for neither Olive's ıame nor mine can be found in the Blue 3ook——"

"I wondered, tonight, why she constantly :eferred to you as Allan. The familiarity of t led me to surmise childhood friendships and ıll that sort of thing."

"Calling folks by their first names may be ı habit with friend Eleanor. It's a common :nough habit. Some fellows like it. They hink it can mean only one thing: that they ıave been singled out for special attention." Allan's sides began to shake with laughter. Oh, I beg your pardon, 'Clay," he chuckled. Perhaps I spoke too hastily. Did Miss Gage all you Hugh?"

"She did not," said Barclay.

Abstraction came again upon the Westrner. What Eleanor Gage had said about inding an occupation other than dreaming

persisted in flaunting itself before him. It was a red flag to a languid bull. The bull's senses argued against exertion, but his nature demanded it.

So Hugh had roused himself for the charge. And, strangely, he knew exactly what he wanted to become. This time he would not be led astray.

He caught Allan's eye upon him; . . . and set about explaining his preoccupation. "I have been thinking," he declared, "of returning to the University for a post-graduate course in the sciences."

"Fine! I wish you would." Allan was delighted. The carrying out of such a decision would mean not meagre weeks, but months of Hugh's good fellowship. The University was conveniently near; the stage set for a long stay.

"Yes," continued the Westerner, "I shall run out there tomorrow and inquire into the possibilities, and perhaps talk with old Doc

Puggleby. I need the laboratory studies, the analysis and synthesis. I've forgotten much."

"But why this sudden interest? What's the goad? What spurs you on to the darned hard work of study? Jove, I'm glad I'm through with the stuff." It did not occur to Scott to associate Miss Gage with Hugh's awakened ambition.

Allan's query set Hugh probing below the surface. After all, what was it that had urged upon him the sciences, philosophy? Not Eleanor Gage alone. . . . She had stirred it up; but a thing must exist before one can stir it up. True, in Arizona he had entertained no such disquieting ambitions. . . . He had been content to lie all day on the mountain and do nothing but watch nature at work, and dream. . . . That was it. Dream. And dreaming, with him, was philosophizing lazily. Science implied action. He was growing eager now to act. . . . Eleanor was the link between the dream and the action. The

fight with the chauffeur had helped: it crystalized things. He hadn't fought with his fists since high-school days, and so had all but lost his sense of physical power—the hidden power that came to the surface at call. It was so with his brain, perhaps. . . . He brought to mind his attempts in newspaper work, in the field of business, in banking—all failures. Would it be so with this, or had he struck the vein?

He told Allan of his wonderings, but left Eleanor out.

Allan was surprised at the trend of his chum's cogitations. Hugh was revealing himself as a thinker, as a man with a serious aim in life, and not as the quiescent gentleman of leisure his acquaintances painted him. But why? The answer was lacking. Of course, the Arizonian had always been an imaginative cuss, but never to any purpose. He had accepted life as it was, revelled in it, loved it. Now he sought a widening sphere of mental

ctivity. Allen respected him for it, just as he espected authors and seers who dwelt in the bstract; yet the why and wherefore of it all vas beyond him. Still, he would say nothing o discourage the project. He wanted Barlay's company, and would urge the study of ny subject to get it.

"The idea of your staying with me is tremendous," enthused Scott. "There are big times ahead."

"But I can't stay here, Allan, old fellow. I can't take advantage of your mother and yourself by stretching a two weeks' visit into a stay of a year or more. Thanks, no. I shall unearth a cozy little apartment————"

"Not while I am conscious. You'll stay here—right here—whether for six months or two years. Why——"

And so it was arranged.

Allan arose; began to remove his collar. Chancing to look in a mirror, he was reminded rather harshly of his injured eye. An ominous

purple tint suffused the puffed and swollen flesh, and, as he looked, it commenced throbbing painfully. The longer he looked the more it throbbed. Allan was distinctly annoyed.

"Here I'd forgotten all about it," he complained. "I was happy. I didn't know I had it. And the very moment I look at the darned thing, it gets painful—acts as though it ought to live up to its reputation. Well, it's got a rotten reputation."

Disgusted, he turned away from the mirror. "Wonder what mother will say, and Olive, and the neighbors? Looks as though I had come out at the losing end of a cheap brawl, doesn't it?"

"It isn't attractive, I'll admit; but you can explain it away. Tell them the manner it came about. They will take your word for it."

"Yes, of course. After all, it isn't that, so much, that I care about. I am angry at myself for allowing it to happen—for not being on my guard."

"Naturally."

Allan rubbed his good eye, and yawned.

"I hear the call of the couch," he blinked. "Are you ready for bed?"

"I am whenever you are," answered Hugh.

"Fine. I'm ready now. G'night. See you in the morning, 'Clay."

Barclay was not tired. His mind was too full. He went to his room and sat on the edge of the bed. He thought of the silver goblet, where it lay in his suitcase, and stooped and brought it out. He looked at it, and it reminded him of his lineage. It always did that.

"All right, Dad," he whispered. "I am beginning to make something of myself—for your honor and the honor of all the Barclays."

He put the goblet away; and began to undress.

There was a small bookcase in Hugh's room. For the most part it contained art magazines and trade journals piled in careless leaning towers from shelf to shelf but the open places

were occupied by a score or more books. Hugh proceeded to examine these, and recognized some of them as old college acquaintances. There was Faraday's "Forces of Matter," a volume of Montaigne, another of Darwin, Hawthorne's "Scarlet Letter," a dozen novels of the day, a set of Edgar Poe's works, a tiny, leather-covered edition of "The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam."

"Good books, these," mused Barclay. He selected the copy of Montaigne, and took it to bed with him.

The book opened on the essay "That to Philosophize is to Learn How to Die." Hugh looked at the title, acknowledged the truth of it with a rueful smile, and plunged into the text.

Instead of this perusal wooing slumber, its action was quite the reverse. The Westerner found himself stimulated. He was constantly reminding himself to be alert to catch the full meaning of this phrase or that idea. He forced

his mental faculties to "toe the mark," with the result that all desire for sleep vanished.

Barclay recognized in Montaigne's measured sentences many thoughts that coincided with vague and illy formed impressions of his own—impressions that had come to him as he lay under Arizona stars and breathed Arizona air. And he delighted in the printed expressions much as though they had been his own vagrant notions come to life on the page before him.

At times during the reading he objected to the advancement of certain perceptions, and at such times formulated independent opinions which satisfied him for the time being. Four years of University training made this process of thought substitution easily possible. His mind was supple, well balanced. It was, in truth, ripe for work.

Hugh had completed the third essay in the book of Montaigne, and was beginning the

fourth, when the first pale rays of dawn crept through his window and destroyed in a twinkling the brilliance of the electric light above his head.

He was surprised at this sudden approach of morning, and promptly laid the volume aside, and extinguished the incandescent lamp. He stretched out in luxurious comfort on the bed, drew the covers about him, closed his eyes——

A myriad fantastic pictures came to him as he drifted into slumber. There were fights and brawls and class rooms and deserts. Without order or sequence they trooped vividly by, sharply defined at first but gradually dimming as sleep overcame consciousness. The last picture was that of Eleanor Gage. Her back was turned to him, and he marvelled, drowsily, at the masses of blonde hair that cascaded over her shoulders and covered her like a cape of gold. She turned her face toward him as he looked—and a shocked exclamation passed his

lips, for that beautiful countenance was marred with a puffed and swollen eye.

Then....the darkness of sound sleep.

## CHAPTER V

### A NEW ACTIVITY

The desire to fit himself for intellectual service had sunk its roots into the fertile mind of Barclay, and, once implanted, grew with amazing rapidity to the proportions of an obsession.

Already his thoughts were turned, covertly, toward the writing of philosophical books and articles. But a maturity of thought that was typical of him, withheld his pen, for he realized that he was not yet prepared to deliver himself to the public.

First came study.

So he went out to the University, a friendly caller.

The day was cold but brilliant with sunshine. Heavy swinging signs, extending from shop fronts along the Avenue, creaked endlessly in

the fresh north wind. The trolley cars rumbling by bore frost on their windows, and all about were evidences of fair, mid-winter weather.

Cities usually had a dampening effect upon Barclay. But when a man's eyes are turned inward he forgets his surroundings. It was so now. Hugh swung along in pleasant oblivion, and covered the three miles to the University without once observing the things he had frequently denounced as the melancholy manifestations of a cramped existence.

The University buildings were located in the city's western sector, across the river and well removed from bustling shopping districts. Tall and stately and imposing though these structures were, they seemed timid and in constant horror of exposure, and so shrank back from the public thoroughfares and partially hid themselves in the center of a spacious, tree-covered lawn. The trees were stark and the lawn bleak. And the buildings, denuded

of their green veils, seemed quite distressed. Indeed, upon Hugh's approach, the dead leaves on the campus stirred themselves as though to warn him away.

He didn't hear the leaves. He strode into the first great building and sought out the office and asked for a catalogue. It was given him. Absently, he thanked the clerk for her courtesy, and departed in search of a quiet nook where, undisturbed, he might scan the curriculum.

He found that nook in the faculty room: a noiseless place wherein the professors were wont to meet and mingle. The room was empty when Barclay peered in so he entered with perfect abandon, slumping into the largest and most comfortable leather unholstered chair, and making himself entirely at home.

The catalogue yielded nothing of extraordinary interest. Hugh lingered fondly over certain passages dealing with biology and physics; but he had covered all that ground

before, and, though he had forgotten more than he remembered, a few weeks of review would serve to bring the truant thoughts to mind. What he needed—and he thoroughly realized this need—was an intensified course of instruction. How to get it? The curriculum offered no solution.

Books! Solitary study within the four walls of his room! That was one way out, provided, of course, that he was willing to sacrifice laboratory work. And yet it failed in a most essential thing: it offered no excuse for his presence in the city. Solitary study could just as well be conducted on the side of a mountain. But he wanted to remain in the city. He had a reason for wanting to stay.

In spite of all appearances to the contrary, Hugh's craving for the heights of scientific thought and his girl interest were separate and distinct. To speculate, haphazardly, on the unknown was no new thing with him. Interest in life, in death, in the cosmos, smouldered,

and always had smouldered, deep in his brain cells. But the flare-ups were infrequent. He never encouraged them. They saddened him. In the final reckoning, it had been a girl that fanned the flame—and in thoughtless jest, no doubt.

Barclay knew these things for themselves. He was not deluded. He reasoned the matter out. Eleanor Gage had, unthinkingly, perhaps, carved his career. Whether her remarks were prompted by interest in him or by the mere desire to make enlivening conversation was neither here nor there. The fact remained, she had influenced him.

Hugh was staring intently at the catalogue, yet he saw no imprints of type. He saw no generous white margins, no charts nor other illustrations. He saw nothing tangible. He was looking into the future.

"Hugh Barclay, as I live!" The deep-toned exclamation was full of surprise.

The Arizonian's thoughts came tumbling

back into the present. He looked up from the depths of the leather upholstered chair.

"May I have a ticket on your train of thought?" rumbled the little, bewhiskered man who stood before him. It was old Doc Puggleby himself. And the Doctor had observed Hugh's preoccupation.

"Good morning, Doctor," said Barclay, smiling his pleasure. "It is good to see you again."

The little man bayed a retort in kind through his fierce whiskers. Puggleby's voice was all out of proportion to his height. In fact, he was, throughout, a man of peculiarly contrasting proportions: his bodily frame small, his brain area large; his beard bristling, his eyes inviting. He was a veritable Doctor Johnson for loud utterance, a Goldsmith for gentleness of character.

Gazing at Puggleby inspired Hugh with an idea; and the solution of his stay-in-the-city-and-study problem seemed near at hand.

He would ask the diminutive instructor to become his mentor. It was a bold request to lay before so prominent an educator as Doctor Puggleby; and young Barclay, realizing this, gave himself no time to consider the possibility of a refusal. In that whimsical, detached way of his that made folks like him, he began: "Everybody, even Jim Montana, tells me I should quit dreaming and do something worth while. You are not acquainted with Jim Montana, nor with the others, Doctor; but that doesn't matter. I have decided to follow their advice. I have decided to become somebody—a philosopher, if possible. I want your help."

Puggleby's eyes grew quizzical. "I am sure I haven't the remotest idea of what you are trying to say," he rumbled.

This interruption touched Hugh with the fear that Puggleby might, after all, mistake him for an idle dabbler in the serious. That

would hurt. He put passionate sincerity into his words thereafter.

"I want to write on philosophical subjects," continued the Westerner. "I want to think the big thoughts, and think them in terms that will be easily understood. I have those thoughts within me now, but they're all a-jumble. They lack orderly arrangement. And I know it. I feel that I am not properly equipped. You are the man to equip me, Doctor. Give me an hour a day; I'll pay whatever you ask. Coach me, preach to me, hammer things into me, and—by Heaven—I'll make myself of some use if it takes every waking hour of my time!"

Doctor Puggleby stood in dignified contemplation. Hugh's plea, discharged with fervid abruptness, was a totally unexpected thing. To ask, and apparently expect, the dean of the science department of a famous university to adopt tutoring as a side line was—well, imaginative, if nothing more.

"It is rather a pity," the professor mused aloud, "that this awakening of yours, this finding of yourself, could not have been accomplished during your college days."

Hugh felt that the situation was slipping out of his hands. "You're right," he agreed, and there was a shade of disappointment in his voice. "But it is too late to whine. I am like many others, I guess. I studied with no object in view; I learned only to forget. I am trying now to correct that mistake."

Puggleby pursed his lips, and tugged at his beard, and rocked backward and forward on his square-toed shoes. Clearly, this ex-pupil of his was bent on winning a place in the world. Would it be right not to help him? Puggleby's kindliness came to the surface.

There was silence in the faculty room. Young man and old looked into each other's eyes. Then:

"I'll do it," roared the diminutive instructor, shoving his hand into Hugh's. "I am inter-

ested in you, Barclay. I want to see you grow. Come here at four o'clock every afternoon, and we will tackle the big subject together!"

## CHAPTER VI

### ON THE AVENUE

Barclay departed from the University buildings in a state of exultation. He felt that he had taken an important step toward achievement; and it was his vanity to picture a certain blue-eyed young lady as being pleased, if not actually delighted, when she learned what he had done. With a typical lack of penetration into the faults and frailties of his friends, Hugh failed to perceive that the studies he contemplated, rather than attracting him to Miss Gage would in all probability make him boresome to her.

However, he was happy. The cold air, the sunshine, the exercise of foot travel and, above all, his thoughts of the future were as tonic to this man from Arizona. He swung buoy-

antly along, a world in himself, peopled by dreams.

He had traversed many blocks had struck the Avenue on which the Scott Gallaries were located, and was within half a mile of the shop itself, when a familiar figure crossed his horizon.

The figure had emerged from a sporting goods store and was hurrying toward a glittering limousine that waited nearby. Hugh saw that it was Eleanor Gage, and saw, too, that she was attractively attired in a blue sweater with roll collar, a short, dark blue skirt, and stout boots laced tightly about the ankle and calf. She wore a blue tam o'shanter. From beneath a corner of this chic head covering peeped a curl that glinted in the rays of the sun.

Later, Hugh remembered having commented to himself on the peculiarity of his taking note of these dress details. It was something he usually overlooked.

As he neared the girl whose eyes had haunted him since the night before, the Westerner observed a pair of ice skates slung by a strap over her shoulder. Ah! So she cared for outdoor sports? A good point to remember. He catalogued in his mind: "Buy a pair of ice skates."

It was on his tongue's end to tell her of his success with Doctor Puggleby, but now that she was before him, he thought better of it. The time to talk would be when he accomplished something, not while in the first stages of preparation, he argued.

She met him with a trite expression, yet an expression which led to peculiar developments.

"Did you arrive safely home this morning, Mr. Barclay?"

"I hardly know how to answer," said Hugh. "We had a little difficulty with our chauffeur."

"No!"

"Yes, indeed. He was an aggressive sort of person——"

Eleanor interrupted with an irrelevant "John James Fiske would like to meet him, then. The more aggressive the better, Johnny says."

Barclay wondered if this remark might be indicative of the girl lacking interest in him. It hurt to have the subject so rudely changed. "Who," he asked, "is John James Fiske?"

"They call him the millionaire manager. He goes in for prize-fights and all that sort of thing—does it for fun, you know."

"Oh."

Hugh's non-committal exclamation apparently awoke Miss Gage to the disjointedness of their conversation. She acknowledged her error by coming back to the original topic.

"Really, these taxi-cab men are all the same," she sighed. "Forever bullying one into paying excessive fare."

"This fellow went further than loud talk."

"He fought with you?"

"He did."

"But why?"

"Because Allan refused to be swindled. The chauffeur demanded three times the legitimate rate. Allan said he didn't mind bestowing charity but hated to be robbed. That started things. The policeman on the beat—a friend of Allan's—interfered, and made the chauffeur take water by threatening the lock-up. It was a merry affair while it lasted."

"Who had the upper hand before the officer interfered? Were none of you hurt?" There was an excited gleam in those liquid pools called eyes, and instantly came to Hugh's mind a picture of the ancient Roman Coliseum, of women spectators leaning over the parapet, of excited eyes and heaving breasts, and of thumbs pointed downward in sign of death to some unfortunate gladiator. But no sooner had he conjured the picture before him, than he berated himself for so doing. Who was he to defame the gentleness, the soft, sweet womanliness of Eleanor Gage?

"Allan has a black eye. It is not serious, of course. A very ordinary black eye, though rather expensive in these days of high food costs—he's hiding it under a piece of steak, you know. As for the chauffeur, we gave every joint in his body chiropractic treatment."

"Good," she commented. "He deserved it."

They smiled, and immediately were on more friendly footing. She spoke of other things, lauding a certain new dance step, critically reviewing the weather, and then proceeding, with an odd little laugh—a laugh quite beyond Barclay's comprehension—to a discussion of what she termed the rapidly developing romance between Allan Scott and Olive Henderson.

"Olive is absolutely immersed in him," flashed the girl in the blue tam o'shanter. "She tags after him wherever he goes."

"Now I thought it was quite the reverse,"

opined Barclay, wonder in his voice. "I was under the impression that Allan——"

"No, no, no," cried Miss Gage. "You are wrong. She is the pursuer. Allan had better ——"

Finding Hugh's questioning eyes upon her, the little blonde must have become aware of the peculiarity of her attitude, for she quickly modulated her voice and allowed a smile to touch her lips.

"Silly me——getting wrapped up in other folks' love affairs," she chided herself. "I suppose I'll never outgrow the habit. So Allan is nursing a black eye, you say? I am awfully sorry."

"It is too bad," acknowledged Barclay. His gaze wandered to the skates.

"You're going for a spin on the ice?"

"I am. I love skating. Do you skate, Mr. Barclay?"

"Occasionally," nodded Hugh.

"Why, that's just splendid! Some day per-

haps real soon, we shall meet out there on the river——"

"I am looking forward to such a meeting." He expected the invitation then—that very moment—but it was not forthcoming.

With a dainty fillip of her forefinger, Eleanor turned back the sleeve of her sweater, revealing a diamond studded wrist watch. She regarded the timepiece demurely.

"I must be going," she offered the watch, as though it were to blame for her departure.

"Good-bye, Miss Gage." He clasped her hand, and his black eyes hung upon the color and the contour of her face. He forgot his presence on a public thoroughfare. To him it seemed they were alone. He was thinking of the night before.

"We should see each other often: we are such near neighbors," said the girl; and, as he held her hand, and as passing citizens bestowed frequent grins upon the couple, a flush mantled her cheeks.

This petite, golden haired little body for a brief moment held the man entranced, just as the crystal gazer is transfixed by his spherical ball of glass. He was the gazer, she the mysterious, changing hued crystal. And such trivial faults as he had found in her during their brief acquaintanceship faded and dissolved and lost themselves utterly in the depths of what he was pleased to regard as her crystalline soul.

The flush deepened. Suddenly observant, Barclay released the girl's hand.

"I—I beg your pardon, Miss Gage," he was sincerely distressed.

"I gladly grant you pardon," came the soft answer. And she was gone.

Hat in hand, oblivious to whistling north wind and grinning pedestrians alike, Barclay stood and watched the limousine in its course down the Avenue.

## CHAPTER VII

### BY WORD OF MOUTH

The one thought that hammered through Eleanor's brain after bidding Hugh Barclay good-bye was to see Olive and be the first to tell her of the fight with the chauffeur, and of Allan's black eye.

She did not stop to analyze the why of her desire. All she knew was that she wanted to be the carrier of the news and perhaps the censor of it.

In reality, there were stirrings of intrigue within her — vague pictures of separated lovers, and of her own conquests. These were products of the jealousy that sees red and keeps a sweet face.

Olive was too sure of herself and of her hold on Allan Scott, decided the girl in the lim-

ousine. Something should be done to jar her out of her positiveness.

So Eleanor postponed for half an hour or more her spin on the ice, and directed the chauffeur to drive to the Henderson home.

She found Olive shrouded from neck to heels in a gingham apron, a dusting cap on her head and a broom in her hands.

There was surprise in Olive's eyes, yet she voiced no trace of it. "Good morning," she greeted, throwing wide the door. "Won't you come in?"

"I will for just a moment," agreed Eleanor. "I am on my way to the river. They say the ice is smooth as glass. I try never to miss a day of good skating, you know."

"I like skating, too," acknowledged Olive.

"Come with me, dear—do," urged the little blonde, but there was no eagerness in her voice. It was an invitation extended for the sake of politeness. Eleanor was not overjoyed with the thought of a girl companion on that

particular morning. In fact, she would have resented anything but a refusal to her suggestion.

"I am sorry—truly I am," said Olive. "But today I'm cleaning the whole second floor, and I shall be at it until late this afternoon. It is duty against desire, don't you see?"

The blonde wanted to laugh. This talk of duty to one's housework was funny. Olive must think herself a very good little girl.

But she didn't laugh. She nodded, and followed Olive down a short stretch of hallway into the parlor on their right.

"Oh, yes, I must tell you before I forget," cried Eleanor, very much as if an elusive, though extremely interesting bit of gossip had recurred to her at this most opportune time. "I met the man from Arizona—what's his name? Mr. Barclay?——on the Avenue this morning. We chatted fully fifteen minutes. And would you believe it, after leaving us at

our doors early this morning, he and Mr. Scott experienced an exciting adventure!"

"No! I hadn't heard—" Olive's face paled. "Were they—were either of them hurt?"

"It wasn't really a big adventure," depreciated she of the blue tam o'shanter. "Mr. Barclay laughed at it."

Olive was visibly reassured, but apprehension lingered in her eyes. Her face assumed a grave expression.

Eleanor felt that her auditor had scented trouble. And, oddly, at that moment she thought of the absinthe lover who had shot himself, and of Olive's fear of drink. Instantly a modified version of Hugh's story shaped itself in her mind.

"It was like this," she continued. "The boys—Hugh and Allan—stopped at a saloon ——"

"But Allan doesn't drink," protested Olive. She was hurt now, and tears were in evidence; yet Eleanor, who was held with the vision of

winning Allan Scott away from this little home-body, refused to deviate from her chosen course.

"I know nothing whatever of Mr. Scott's or Mr. Barclay's attitude toward temperance," was Eleanor's cool reply. "I am repeating the tale as it was told to me."

Olive said nothing.

The light-haired girl toyed nervously with the strap on her skates, drawing it in and out of the retaining buckle. At length she looked up. Olive was seated on the arm of a chair, waiting—waiting, in a troubled frame of mind, for such information as her supposed friend cared to divulge. Suddenly Eleanor knew she had the upper hand. She had played upon Olive's most vulnerable characteristic: her shuddering, unreasoning detestation of drink. Regarding Allan, she had sown a single, tiny seed of doubt in the other's mind. It was enough. Such seeds grow, of their own volition, to gigantic proportions. She proceeded:

"The boys stopped at a saloon and invited the chauffeur to drink with them; the air was so cold and biting, you know, and driving a car at night in such weather is anything but pleasant. Well, they had a number of drinks. The chauffeur was used to whiskey, so he ordered it every time—big, undiluted glasses of it—" Eleanor's imagination, inflamed by jealousy, was working with extraordinary vigor. The deeper she got into the story, the more amplifications and exaggerations presented themselves— "and—and presently the taxi driver grew tipsy. Up to this time he had permitted Allan and Hugh to treat him without making more than a weak effort to pay for his share of the drinks. But now he insisted on treating. He was a sport. He was a 'good guy'—Mr. Barclay told it so laughably. Allan then ordered the chauffeur to put his money away—said it was worthless when he was along. The chauffeur argued that his money was as good as any man's. Foolishly,

llan made no attempt to pacify the fellow, ut firmly stood his ground. The driver must ot treat, that was the edict. Whereupon, the ough chap lost his temper, and struck Allan n the face. They were separated before urther damage was done. However, Mr. Barclay tells me that Allan's eye is in a orridly discolored and inflamed condition to-ay."

As she voiced these concluding remarks, Eleanor kept her eyes on her companion's ace, noting the effect of her words. At men-ion of the disfiguring blow, a repressed excla-nation—as though she too, had been struck—ame from Olive's lips. That was all. Now he sat, white faced—long, dark lashes droop-ng over the tears that welled to her eyes—truggling bravely to compose herself, to hide er desire to cry from the gaze of another.

At that moment a pang of regret shot hrough Eleanor's heart. But it passed uickly, for reason told her that she had sub-

merged herself too deeply in this affair to allow sentiment to sway her. It was natural that Olive should recoil from the picture of Allan engaged in a bar-room brawl. The pain was only temporary. Later would come disgust, and then, perhaps—loathing. And this would be permanent, for Olive was a stubborn little thing when aroused. After the desired rupture between the couple, Eleanor would step in, with her charms and golden beauty——

Thoughts such as these, though not so harshly expressed, poured through the mind of vain, jealous, self-loving Eleanor. She saw no evil in what she had done. All's fair in love, they say, and she wanted to gain a conquest. This was her way of going about it: stirring up trouble in the enemy's camp.

Silence fell in the long, narrow parlor, a silence that was disconcerting. Not a whimper nor a word came from Olive. Eleanor Gage realized that it was time to go. She arose and put her free arm around the aproned girl's neck.

"I am sorry I spoke, dear," she whispered, although she was conscious of no such sorrow, but rather of an elation of spirits. "Had I known the news would affect you as it has, you would have learned nothing from me."

Olive twice swallowed the lump that rose in her throat. "P-perhaps it is better that I do know," she murmured.

Eleanor patted her on the shoulder. "Never mind," she consoled. "Things are not so bad as they seem. Surely, very few of us look upon drinking as a vice."

"But I do," choked Olive. The tears were coming at last.

"I must be going," was the blonde's reply. She kissed Olive's dry lips, murmured a hasty farewell, and, with the swirl of a dark blue skirt, was off and away for the river of mirror-like ice that beckoned so insistently. Olive heard the clank and clash of her skates as she swung them in her hand, heard the creaking of the door as it opened and closed, heard

the purring of the motor; then the spoiled child of the Great God Beauty was gone and again silence brooded over the long, narrow parlor.

Olive slipped from the arm of the padded chair into its voluminous depths, where she curled up in a forlorn little ball and had her cry out. The tears brought but a modicum of relief, however, for the sadness that was hers refused to be banished.

Her first, all consuming desire had been to get in immediate communication with Allan, to telephone him and question him regarding the disgraceful details of the fight. For to her, the altercation, as Eleanor had described it, was degrading. But another thought held her hand from the telephone receiver. Had it been Allan's wish for her to know, would he not have phoned long before, and divulged all? It was natural to suppose that he would. It was natural also to suppose that, in the

very nature of things, Allan preferred to hold his tongue.

Although Olive had never discussed this matter of drink with Allan—had rarely, if ever, mentioned the subject of intemperance in a personal way—she had somehow come to look upon him as an abstainer. And she had felt secure in the unsubstantiated knowledge of his sobriety. More poignantly even than the average home-loving woman, she feared the ravages of alcohol; she feared men under its influence. Memories of the lodger who loved absinthe returned to torture her. And now came news that Allan—a new, a different, a wine-bibbing Allan—had suffered a black eye in a bar-room brawl; and with the coming of the news Olive's fondest air-castles crashed to earth.

Olive was forced to believe every word of Eleanor Gage's story. Told by Barclay, as Eleanor had declared, it bore the guise of truth. There were no loopholes for doubt, no

reason to hope that a mistake had been made.

The day was Friday. It had been arranged, shortly after Barclay's arrival in the city, that he and Allan take Sunday dinner with the Hendersons. So Olive decided not to telephone Scott, nor to communicate with him in any way regarding his fracas with the drunken chauffeur, but to wait until Sunday, when they might get together for a few moments of private conversation and definitely settle the drink bugaboo.

Disappointment hard upon her, Allan's girl returned to her household duties. And, despite the proximity of the telephone, despite her burning desire to lift the receiver from its hook and call the number of a certain art-and-antique shop on the Avenue, she forbore. With an effort of the will, she forced herself to endure two long days of doubt.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE RAKISH YOUNG MAN

Meanwhile in a topsy turvy hardware store on the Avenue, Hugh Barclay was buying a pair of ice skates. Hugh was cheerful and a trifle excited, although his perennially grave mien his bright black eyes and rather gaunt countenance, gave no hint of levity. Unconscious of the damage his chance meeting with Eleanor Gage had wrought, Hugh was busy with the living of his own life, which was now quite full and interesting. And there were no sorrows to mitigate his high hopes.

The skates selected, the fat, loquacious hardware dealer paid and his thanks acknowledged, Barclay set out for the river—and Eleanor.

Now he took recourse to a trolley car, being in a hurry to reach his destination. And as he hung by a strap in the crowded swaying

vehicle, his thoughts went back for a brief excursion in Arizona, and he told himself that Jim Montana's superstitious premonitions had somehow found fulfillment. Jim had said: "I've got a funny w'at-a-you-call-'em feeling that something's going to happen." Something had happened. Hugh had stumbled upon a fascinating girl and a fascinating vocation at one and the same time; and of course, just as Jim feared, young Barclay had settled down for an indefinite stay in the East——

The trolley ride was brief. It seemed Hugh had no sooner stepped on the car than the brakes clamped down on the wheels and screeched the news that skaters' paradise was at hand. The big, green public conveyance disgorged its passengers, most of whom, like Barclay, carried skates, in double quick time. At the conductor's signal, the car clanged away, while the crowd scattered to the river bank. Hugh followed the crowd.

He did not find her immediately. He idled

about the river, gliding smoothly up and down and from shore to shore, before he found her. And in the interval he was busy, as usual, with his thoughts.

The river, with the city stretched out on both banks of it, was no new thing to him. He remembered it as though he had left it but yesterday. College duties had suffered because of it. Even with impending exams hanging dark above him, Hugh had frequently, in the years that were passed, tossed discretion and desire for knowledge to the winds, so that he might glide for hours upon the ice of the river, or dip the paddle of his canoe in its green waters. And now, looking eagerly around in quest of a certain golden haired girl, his eyes fell upon and recognized anew the many landmarks that added color and quaintness to the metropolis. There was the same bridge, with its steel frame and stone buttresses. There were the same severely gray homes of a dozen boat clubs, odd buildings of

the architecture of '98—buildings that kneeled by the waters edge, and in summer felt the melancholy lapping of wavelets. And behind all this lay the park drive of macadam—and still further back the city streets and miles of red brick homes. It was all right, he decided. It never failed to satisfy the people who lived in herds. Yet there was an inexplainable despondency about it——

What was this lone river—this one touch of nature in a bedlam of civilization—compared with the wonders of the wild? In far-away Arizona nature ran riot: tossed its crags and precipices high in the air, spread the desert sands with a single sweep of its own giant hand. Everywhere, in the canyons and valleys, rivers and streams, in the very tints of an Arizona sunset were bold evidences of a tremendous unseen power at work, moulding and fashioning this world of atoms—for what? In Arizona these evidences were easily apparent. Man had but to look around him. But in this

y of red brick cubby-hole homes and stone dewalks and tall, steel office buildings the vidences were almost erased. The river alone emained.

Hugh's musings no more than skimmed the surface of philosophic thought. They lacked true depth and direction; and he sensed their shortcomings, and was dissatisfied. He determined to correct this condition with the help of his books and Doctor Puggleby.

The while he thought, Hugh covered a vast area of ice on his newly purchased skates. And always his black, penetrating eyes were searching for a blue tam o'shanter with a bright curl peeping from its under edge.

When he did find her, it was with a sudden sense of dismay. She was in the company of a rakish young man. They were skating leisurely along, hand in hand, heads inclined toward each other in conversation. This was a situation the Westerner had not anticipated.

That the girl in blue failed to perceive Hugh

was patent, for she flashed gracefully by, some twenty feet distant, with not so much as a glance around.

Barclay's face was no barometer of his feelings, however. For, in spite of the sudden glumness that possessed him, his countenance remained impassive. No disappointment was mirrored there. If anything, the jaw projected at a little sharper, a little more aggressive angle; the lips tightened into a thin, determined line. These were the only signs of change in the former exuberance of his feelings.

Hugh circled about on the ice, and headed for the shore. The river had lost its lure. He had no desire to remain.

Eleanor's company was denied him. He could not claim her that day. Whether or not the rakish chap was a chance acquaintance, a constant admirer or a relative, did not bother the Arizonian. All he wanted was to be alone with the girl he had come so suddenly to like.

All he cared about was to glide along hand in hand with her, just as the rakish young man was doing at that very moment.

Hugh sat on the bank and unbuckled his skates. By him moved an endless procession of youth and maid. He saw them, but to him they were all alike. They had the same noses and eyes and lips. Their hair was the same. Their legs and arms were the same. They were animated dummies peopling the landscape. Personality they knew not. Differences of opinion they knew not. They were straw-stuffed suits of clothes with false-faces all alike. Only one among them possessed the attributes of life. And she was in the company of another straw-stuffed nonentity whose glaring plaids advertised him to be a sport and a "good fellow."

Barclay was free from jealousy. He hardly considered the other young man. He had counted upon enjoying Eleanor's company. A splendid day, a splendid girl, and an after-

noon that was all his own had promised delightful things. But—and the BUT was so large and so ominous that it obscured all else —the splendid girl was taken, and Hugh was of course a Barclay, and therefore too much of a gentleman to intrude.

Skates in hand, he turned away from the river and its host of frequenters; and a moment later boarded one of the big, green cars that would carry him back to the Avenue.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE DECISION

It was Sunday morning. Hugh lay in bed, asleep. Pale light came through the window and the body of him responded. He turned on his side. He twisted about impatiently. His subconscious mind caught and faintly recorded the desire for activity that stirred within him. The activity increased. Barclay awoke.

He lay flat on his back for some moments, staring up and out of the window at the low hanging clouds that tumbled recklessly through space. Snow clouds, he decided. They sifted and diffused the light of the newly risen sun as though a thousand rumpled sheets of drab colored muslin had come between the earth and its luminary. The result was depressing, so very depressing that Hugh was

instantly reminded of the rakish young man. He closed his eyes, but found sleep quite impossible. All was quiet throughout the house. All was quiet throughout the neighborhood. Not even the rumble of a passing trolley car broke the stillness.

Sunday morning! The day of the week recurred to Hugh, and with it came a well founded suspicion that the Scotts would sleep later than usual. Whereupon, he slipped out of bed and into his clothes, moving noiselessly about the room as he dressed.

Being at heart a man of the open, Barclay felt the desirability of an early morning walk. He cast another skyward glance through the window. The storm clouds were piling up in huge, menacing rolls. The wind had an eery whistle. Occasional flurries of snow spilled through the air.

The average, substantial citizen, rising early on Sunday morning and noting these signs of impending storm, would hastily crawl back in

bed and enjoy another hour under the warm blankets. A month ago Hugh might have done likewise; but not now. The strength within him had broken its bonds of mental and physical laziness, and given him an entirely new outlook. He wanted to be up, out and doing—doing something, anything so long as he was active.

Barclay unlocked his door and stole into the hallway. A clock in the steeple of a neighborhood church tolled the hour of seven. The Westerner paused to count the resonant sounds. A second later a clock in the store below tinkled seven times.

A liberated energy plus primitive love of the open—even if that open be only the city streets—led Barclay on his walk. He had no objective. Yet that walk, objectless as it was, culminated in a very important decision on the part of the man from Arizona.

Momentous thoughts are sometimes suggested by the commonest of scenes. Witness:

the first thing to catch and hold Hugh's gaze, as he strode through the deserted streets, was a milk bottle. It was no different, in shape, size, or contents, from ten million other milk bottles. It was very ordinary and unpretentious, standing on the top step of a private house, beside a carefully wrapped loaf of bread and a stack of Sunday papers. But it was a milk bottle, and it suggested a home of one's own——

A home of one's own meant to Hugh not a little red-brick cubbyhole, but a great squat mansion, somewhere in the West, with outhouses and thoroughly modern equipment, and manned by a corps of servants—a typical Barclayian estate transplanted from old Virginia. It meant a wife and children to inhabit that mansion. It meant someone he could love more than he had loved his past indolence, more than he loved the plains and the stars and the great outdoors—something he could love more than his dreams——

## THE DECISION

Hugh stood on the pavement and looked at the milk bottle and the loaf of bread and the Sunday newspapers. He looked long upon them, and fondly. They were mute evidences of a home of one's own.

It was at that moment and at that spot that Hugh decided to marry Eleanor Gage.

He walked many miles after coming to this decision. And a mental creation of Eleanor Gage walked beside him. She was very real to him. He could hear the soft swish of her skirts as she hurried along. He felt the pressure of her little hand upon his arm. And a wonderful happiness was his, for he had found that which he could love as much—yes, more—than his dreams: a lovely, fragrant slip of a woman whose golden hair would be his to caress, whose lips would belong to him and him alone.

This thought to marry Eleanor Gage was new with Hugh. It had not occurred to him before. True, he had been almost instantly

attracted by her beauty and her dainty ways. His mind had been on her since the night of the dance. But his mind had been too busy assimilating and realizing the beauty of her to dwell upon her in any other light.

A couple of early morning deliveries on the top step of a private house, as well as his having seen her in the company of another man, were the stimuli of his great resolve—and he never doubted that their union would come to pass.

The bleakness of the day increased. The sky was pasty, the air raw and wet. Large flakes of snow wavered on the sidewalk, melted, and added further drabness to the scene.

Hugh encountered occasional pedestrians with coat collars upturned. For the most part there was a disheveled, sleepy look about them. Some carried Sunday papers. Others bore loaves of fresh bread or oblong slices of apple cake from the corner bake shop to their wait-

ing breakfast tables. All pushed through the biting, snow-laden air with shoulders hunched and heads bowed. They cast sidewise glances of astonishment at the tall Westerner as he swung along, head up, black eyes shining, overcoat and undercoat unbuttoned and vest looking out at the elements. "He must think it's spring-time," muttered one passerby to another, and Hugh's acute hearing caught the words, and he smiled down upon the visionary wife who walked by his side.

If ever lived a man with vivid imagination, that man was Hugh Barclay. Lately it had become his policy to objurgate himself for allowing his fancy such free rein. But on the Sunday morning he decided to marry Eleanor Gage, and imagined her walking by his side, he looked upon this whimsical power of his as his greatest possession. That walk was through fairy land, not through the commonplace streets of a commonplace city.

Came to him her very effective words, soft

words uttered on the night of the dance: "I think I should like to marry a philosopher." And again Hugh smiled. He had not accepted her rash statement with any degree of seriousness. Even now he believed the words to convey an entirely different meaning than they seemed to convey. They were subtle. They expressed the girl's desire to mate with a man who had proved himself of worth, with a doer, with a fellow of high aims and altruistic motives. Barclay believed that, whether the man was a philosopher or a civil engineer, a political reformer or the editor of a powerful publication mattered little. The fortunate chap must first of all pursue a worth while career. He must immerse himself in his labors to the extent of bringing out the very best that was in him. But more than this, he must work for the benefit of others as well as for himself ——And he, Hugh, must do these things before thinking of asking the girl to become his wife.

All of which proved that Barclay was a better judge of vast, abstract considerations than of human values.

An hour later the Arizonian let himself into his room. The house was just as he had left it: wrapped in slumber.

The silver goblet greeted him. It stood on the bureau where he had placed it after unpacking. With his eyes upon it, Hugh walked to a chair and sat down. He frowned. He was thinking now of his parentage—

Pride of family! A trait inherited from his father, of course—his father, a Virginia Barclay.

But his mother—the woman called Cherry—

He had only one regret, he told himself, in taking to wife a society belle like Eleanor Gage, and that was—that he could not trace the lineage on his mother's side.

The snow fell silently by his window. Rivulets formed on the glass and trickled their crooked courses to the sill.

Hugh sat in contemplation of the goblet, moody again and troubled, yet determined that his decision should remain as he had made it——and that his dream-home should become a reality.

## CHAPTER X

### BLACK SUNDAY

With the approach of noon, Allan Scott and his good friend, Hugh, slipped away through the snow to the plain, red-brick home of the Hendersons, where they were expected for dinner. Olive, sober-eyed and silent, admitted them.

That Sunday dinner fell as far short of Allan's expectations as diamonds do from paste. Dejection replaced joviality as he sat wondering at Olive's change of heart. And the more he wondered, the lower his feelings drooped, until they became as one with the gray gloom of the slush-covered streets and lowering sky.

Barclay kept the conversation going, although it was plain that he sensed the wrongness of things. Now and again Allan leaned

toward Olive and propounded an unnecessary question or two. She answered in studiously polite tones—tones lacking her usual vibratory friendliness. She made no attempt to converse with him of her own accord. In brief, she ignored him without breaking the rules of common politeness.

Yet Olive was not cold. She was not the kind of a girl who, even in anger, grew frigid. Warmth and a desire to love and be loved were characteristic with her. It was a knowledge of these traits, in the light of the girl's present attitude, that confused Allan.

Perhaps an hour after the meal, Hugh begged to be excused. There were a number of old classmates he must visit—"A good pretext. He sees a spat coming on," muttered Allan.

Alone at last, Olive and her friend repaired to the parlor. They sat one at each window, to all intents and purposes deeply interested in the Sunday supplements that hid their faces.

Neither spoke. The only sound in the room came from the occasional rustling of a newspaper, or the squeak of Allan's chair as he squirmed into a more comfortable position.

Thirty minutes sped by in this manner. Allan spent the last fifteen of them reading a single headline over and over again. He was deeply hurt by Olive's conduct. Search his memory as he would, he could not fathom the cause of it.

However, Allan was discerning enough to observe that Olive derived no enjoyment from her suddenly adopted mode of conduct. At times during the course of the gloomy dinner there had been tears in her eyes. More than once she seemed on the point of taking his arm and clinging to him in the old, friendly way; but she had caught him looking at her and had perceptibly stiffened.

It was clear that he had done or said something displeasing to Olive's sensitive nature. But when had the unfortunate words been

spoken, when the act committed? Surely not on the night of the dance. And he had neither called on her, nor phoned, since then.

What had he done? If only she would speak, and settle the matter once and for all. He wanted her. His arms ached to hold her. To have her evade him was equivalent to a slap in the face.

No doubt he was to blame. The possibilities were that his cursed thoughtlessness had been at fault, and he had hurt her without meaning or wanting to hurt her. Well, he would shoulder the blame. There must be an end to this awful silence that had crept between them.

He threw the newspaper from him, crossed the room and stood by the side of her chair.

"Olive!"

"Yes, Allan?" Her voice quivered as she ineffectually strove to maintain a cool attitude.

"Olive, I— I— you know I care a great deal for you—" He looked down into her face—

again it was full of friendship for him. He felt a quick sense of security and of bounding satisfaction. Everything would be rosy, presently. She was his girl, his woman, after all. This existing difficulty was a mere bubble, to be wafted away into space by a puff from him.

His satisfaction was premature. Deluded by his own rising spirits, he allowed the next question to escape before carefully weighing its possible effect.

"Why have you ignored me?" he wanted to know. "Surely this isn't a sample of your everyday moods, is it?"

Perhaps it was the unmeaning brusqueness of his words, perhaps his misinterpretation of her feelings (for affection, not unconcern, was warm within her) that started the tide against him. Whatever the cause, the result was easily apparent. A crimson flush tinted her cheeks. Her long lashes drooped that she might partially hide the emotions that clashed behind

those lids. Yet Allan, in the moment of what he believed to be his cherished return to favor, failed to read these unmistakable signs. He did not know that Olive wanted to cry. He did not know that he had stung her pride and thereby forbade tears in his presence. And he did not know that unshed tears in a woman are as a volcano hidden beneath dry, hard earth-crust.

"Go read your paper, Allan," she said at last. "I don't want to talk to you." What she really meant was: "If I say another word, boy, you'll know I am crying." But she did not say what she meant; and it was young Scott's turn to feel hurt.

"I had always known you came of old New England stock," the words welled unbidden to his lips and exasperation enunciated them, "but never, until now, had I imagined that a strain of New England stubbornness was a part of your nature. I am disappointed, Olive."

No sooner had he spoken, than he branded

himself a fool. He tried to add a pacifying, consoling remark, but the damage was done, the catastrophe precipitated.

Olive gained her feet, and simultaneously the tears broke forth.

"G-go—home," she sobbed. "I—don't want you here—a moment longer. You're—horrid!"

Allan strove to enfold her in his arms. She thrust him off. And in that moment, the man suffered a thousand pangs of remorse for his tactlessness.

She turned her back on him. This was in the nature of an ultimatum. To Allan, it seemed the world was at an end. What could he do? It was her wish to leave him. He sought his coat and hat and went out into the murky weather and stumbled homeward.

## CHAPTER XI

### AMONG THE ANTIQUES

Allan Scott's charge of obstinacy had awakened obstinacy in Olive's breast. Incidentally, it created a like strain of contumaciousness in the man himself. Of course, Allan was not to blame; nor was Olive. Yet they separated, each with the feeling that an injustice had been committed by the other.

Scott was muddled. He could not account for Olive's conduct. Try as he would to exonerate her in his own mind and lay the entire blame upon himself, he was faced with the constantly recurring question of what he had done to displease her. To his mind there was no answer, lest it be that Olive's coolness on that miserable Sunday afternoon had been nothing more or less than the erratic cavortings of feminine "mood."

## AMONG THE ANTIQUES

Thoroughly disappointed with the trend of his love affair, Allan immersed himself, for a time, in his business. More than ever he cultivated the acquaintance of wealthy men: men who amused themselves with collections of famous paintings, of historic relics, and of hand-wrought knick-knacks in silver and in gold—He became a familiar figure at art auctions. And at home, urged on by his Western friend's application to study, he fell o reading every book and pamphlet and eriodical which might be of use to him in his usiness, until, as time dragged on, he came o rank very high among the city's antiquar-ns.

The arrangement and atmosphere of the cott Galleries reflected, more than the aver-ge shop of its kind, the spirit of the collector. pacious and high ceilinged and full of soft adows was the store interior; and around it n a narrow balcony. The walls beside the lcony were covered like an irregular checker-

board with miniature portraits and medallions. Scattered at studied random on the floor below were glass cases filled to overflowing with treasures—and under the balcony, in massive gilt frames and on easels, stood the larger canvases, partially hidden behind red velvet drapings.

At nights, after the Galleries were closed, Allan and Hugh sat among the shadowy antiques and smoked and talked. Much was said about the West and its ways, but one evening the subject changed to silverware—Allan had concluded a lengthy discussion of Cellini's handling of the precious metal, and was now lying at ease with his head on the back of a leathern arm-chair, blowing smoke in halos, when Hugh bethought himself of the silver goblet which was once his father's.

"Your mention of Cellini," said Barclay, "reminds me of a silver piece I prize above all works of art. It was Dad's—a large goblet, heavy, and dented in places. I have glimpses

f him taking me on his knee and holding the oblet in front of me and telling fantastic tories about rubbing a certain spot on the utside surface and immediately gaining one's eart's desire. Of course he merely revised Aladdin to suit the time and place; but I must ave believed him—I remember spending ours polishing."

"You still have the goblet?" queried Allan.

"Yes. Wait; I'll get it." Hugh ran upstairs o his room. He was back a moment later.

Scott took the goblet in his hands and examined it. "Strange," he mused. "I've never een a piece like this before."

"Never?"

"Never—Where'd your father pick it up?"

"I haven't the least idea."

Again Allan bent over the goblet, searching or identifying marks. "Hump!" he commented. "No clues, yet the deed's done. Here's mystery."

Hugh said nothing. His gaze lingered among the shadows under the balcony.

"If I know anything at all about silverware," continued the antiquarian, "this piece is very, very old—older than any I have in the place."

"I feel linked up with it, somehow," muttered the Arizonian.

"What?"

"Nothing."

Allan got out some reference books, and his interest was further heightened when, after repeated perusals, it was forced upon him that Barclay's chalice resisted the most indefinite of classifications—the design belonged to no period of workmanship with which the varied authors were conversant.

Hugh pursued his musings while Allan delved in the reference volumes. Now that the Westerner had met the girl he wanted for a wife, the obscurity surrounding his mother's identity was brought vividly home to him. He tried not to think of it, but his own pride

of family as well as Eleanor's position in society forced it upon him. And then the goblet, suggestive as it was of his father, put these thoughts in mind constantly.

However, it was an unsolvable mystery, this matter of his mother's genealogy: the dead cannot rise to explain. It should be left alone. It should not be worried about.

"Doesn't your Indian helper—Montana, or whatever his name is—know something about the goblet?" asked Allan, looking up from the book on his knee.

"No more than I have told you," said Hugh. "I think he looks upon it as having very little value. It doesn't seem to interest him. Possibly it's his age that makes him so cynical of material things."

"Or perhaps," added Scott, "he thinks antiques like these are to be had for the asking."

Hugh lapsed into reverie. His gaze went again to the shadows under the balcony, and he

was reminded of the shack on the mountain-side and of the eve of his departure for the East.....

Jim Montana had said of the goblet "It lives! Everything lives." And Barclay had clung to those words, and now, under the tuition of Doctor Puggleby, was shaping a philosophy around them. "Everything lives.... even inanimates!" Therein lay the secret of creation and of all life..... he would pass the word along to his fellow men. And so he dreamed of world problems and his relation to them, of Eleanor, and of his father and mother. And the atmosphere of the antique shop and the shadows under the balcony lured him on, until the place was peopled with a hundred visionary characters, and Hugh rioted among them as though he, too, were a vision.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE OPENING WEDGE

Allan Scott, seated at a desk in the rear of his luxuriously fitted antique shop, was surprised next morning by the entrance of Eleanor Gage.

She came through the wide plate-glass doors slowly and with seeming diffidence. Allan, rising to greet her, saw the Gage limousine waiting by the curb.

He offered her a chair and she sank into it with a grateful little sigh. "I've been shopping," she explained. "So tired."

Scott uttered a few words of sympathy, and waited. Eleanor's eyes traveled around the spacious, rug-covered room.

"You have an awfully pretty place," she murmured, looking up at him.

Allan admitted it, and felt a desire to add,

in a very matter of fact way, that she had awfully pretty eyes; but he smothered the desire.

Eleanor's gaze went back to the details of the shop, and rested at length upon the large draped and easeled portraits under the balcony.

"I've been wanting a Gainsborough—" she began.

Allan drew in his breath; then waxed enthusiastic. "I've got one. I bought it only the other day. I had been after it for months."

He took her to it, and displayed it in all the glory of its wonderful coloring. "But the price is high," he warned.

Eleanor laughed lightly. "I don't care how high the price is. I'll take it."

She arranged to have it sent home.

"And by the way—" she sank back into the chair and trained her soft blue eyes upon him — "father intends buying two large canvases for his office. I thought I would tip you— that's the word they use, isn't it? You might

call at the house tonight or tomorrow night—and— and— well, I am sure you two will be able to do business—"

"A thousand thanks, Miss Gage," said Allan. "It's good of you to help out. I shall try to see your father tonight."

"Yes, do."

They fell to talking of the late dance. Olive was eliminated from the conversation; and Hugh and the chauffeur, too. And, although traces of Allan's black eye still were visible, nothing was said of it—

Shortly after eight o'clock that evening, Allan found himself in the drawing room of the Gage residence. The butler had departed, and Scott was alone with his prospective patron.

Eleanor's father was smooth, almost sleek, in manner. He had that composure which is typical of successful financiers. He had, also, mathematical eyes and a scheming nose. Somehow, in spite of the man's handsome,

bearded features, Allan could not warm to him as he did to most men.

"Smoke?" said the millionaire. It was more of a command than a query. Obligingly, Allan dipped into the extended humidor.

"Now, then, the sort of picture I want—" and Mr. Gage briefly outlined his needs. He had about concluded when the door opened and Eleanor, sheathed in a wonderfully attractive white satin evening gown, swept in upon them. She rustled past Allan without so much as looking at him.... Subsequent actions convinced the youthful antiquarian that she had been momentarily unaware of his presence. Her eyes were red. "Crying, by Jove," Allan told himself.

Eleanor slipped a bare arm around her father's neck.

"M-mother won't go—" her voice had the sound of a disappointed child's— "She says she's indisposed and all that sort of thing. An— and it's no use arguing with her. Oh,

I wish she had told me before I dressed... Will you take me, dad?"

Mr. Gage was making furtive motions with his eyes. Scott knew he was trying to call Eleanor's attention to the fact that they were not alone.

"What are you grimacing about, you old dear?" Perplexed, Eleanor rose to her full height, turned— and saw Allan! She flushed. "I— I didn't—that is, I—" she stammered.

Allan couldn't help smiling.

"I guess I owe an apology," said he. "I should have made my presence known."

"Indeed, no. It is I who owe the apology," insisted the girl in white satin. "I quite ignored you—"

"No harm done," Allan assured her.

"I had planned to go to the opera," Eleanor explained. "And now, at the last moment, mother fails me." She bent a coaxing glance upon her father. "You'll go, though. Won't you, dad?"

"Not unless I am dragged there by wild horses," was the unsympathetic reply. And then a bit of humor came into his coldly handsome face, and he added: "Perhaps Mr. Scott will relieve me."

There was one thing for Allan to do. He did it.

"I'll go—gladly," he agreed.

"You must excuse my hard-heartedness, Scott," smiled the millionaire. "But you see it is entirely a matter of self preservation."

"If that is preservation, I don't want to be preserved," Allan remarked.

"Gallantly said, but lacking in judgment," laughed Mr. Gage.

And so, while another girl sat at home waiting for the phone bell that never rang, Allan Scott and Eleanor went to the opera together.

. . . . . .

At the table next morning, Millionaire Gage looked quizzically at his daughter. "Just why

did you want this Scott fellow to take you to the opera?"

Eleanor knew it would be unwise to tell of her infatuation with the antiquarian. She laughed carelessly.

"Merely to test my powers," she said. "He's been so unapproachable."

"Well," commented her father, "the technique of your acting was admirable."

"Yours, too, Dad," said Eleanor.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE PHILOSPHY OF DESTINY

Months passed, but Hugh Barclay took no count of them. He was immersed in study. Urged on by the picture of connubial happiness he had conjured for himself, and further spurred by the memory of past failures, he daily ploughed the fields of biology, paleontology, astronomy, and abstract philosophy; and the rich facts he accumulated became a part of him, directing, guiding, repressing his boundless imagination.

He visited Eleanor Gage as often as diplomacy permitted, and, although he avoided the topic of his own activity, he could not always restrain his interest in things philosophical, and so frequently indulged in conversations that were nothing short of boresome to the

little blonde. However, she never intimated a lack of interest in his talk.

Eleanor had formed the habit of regarding most men as puppets. They were useful—even necessary. They made life pleasant by paying homage to her beauty; and it was their place to continue doing so, for they themselves could never attain the beauty they worshipped. They themselves had not the wonderful contour of flesh, the delicacy of coloring, the wealth of hair and softness of feature. No, nor could they wear with grace and dignity the filmy fabrics, the fairy-spun gowns of silk and satin that clung to one's body as though woven there, and so brought home to the eyes of men the loveliness of the wearer. They—MEN—could not do these things, did not possess these things. Why, then, should they not acknowledge their allegiance to her? In return she would toss them the crumb of feigned interest, or perhaps bestow a smile, or a soft glance.

This was the way she looked upon Hugh, and upon all others—except Allan Scott.

Eleanor Gage was a peacock—a strutter on the stage of life. True, she was sufficiently educated to converse intelligently, play the game strategically, and exact pleasure from the playing, yet, despite these acquirements, she remained a peacock. Her strategy alone, great and inherent as it was, veiled her true self from the most discerning of her admirers.

It was her self centredness that prevented her from observing the gradual changes taking place in the man from Arizona. Hugh was expanding. Like a giant awakened from sleep, his eyes roved, with growing comprehension, around the walls of his world-cave. And, as knowledge of his surroundings dawned upon him, he struggled to rise, so that his strength might be put to use. Shortly he would find himself, would gain his feet, and then——

To Puggleby these changes signified the

evolution of an unusual mind from lackidaisical disarray to mature strength. To Barclay they meant that he had builded a foundation for the work that was to win the respect and admiration of his wife-to-be....

Study sessions under Doctor Puggleby grew heated. Puggleby was a positive scientist. He dealt with facts and facts only. He discountenanced flights of the imagination, and urged strict adherence to fact.

"No man—," roared he, "no man can dream as well as he can reason— if he wants results. Your habit, sir, of imagining a condition and then proving its practicability by reasoning from the effect to the cause is destructive, sir —destructive and unscientific. It must stop."

The Westerner demurred, but Doctor Puggleby strove to over-rule him with a host of bellowed arguments. Clearly, an intellectual crisis was at hand.

Hugh was spending long, feverish hours in study. The scientific truths he assimilated set

fire to his being, and so great grew the desire to promulgate these truths that the finding of an outlet became absolutely imperative.

Finding the outlet was not difficult. In point of fact, Hugh had contemplated for several months the founding of a philosophical magazine, not for scientists alone, and staid pedagogues, but for the general public as well. He had even gone so far as to settle upon a title for the journal. Thought was the name he chose. He told Doctor Puggleby of his intentions.

The little professor of Johnsonesque demeanor and Goldsmithian character exhibited surprise mingled with apparent displeasure.

"You will never gain a hearing from the public," he thundered. "They are out of your reach, sir. They would not buy your journal."

"May I ask why?" said Barclay softly. He knew the roar of the lion for what it was: a well-meant warning; but he had decided on

the course he intended pursuing. He would not deviate a hairsbreadth.

"Why? Why? Need you ask why?" rumbled the doctor. "You know quite as well as I do, sir, that the public's only desire is to satiate itself with worthless fiction. Folks want a brain diet of mush and milk, not thought."

"I don't believe it," defended Hugh, a degree of sharpness in his voice.

Puggleby wagged his long bristling whiskers. "Pah!" he exploded. "Sir John Eliot wrote a scientific work for the general public. And what came of it? The publishers sold exactly one hundred seventy-two copies. George Von Horn, M.A., LL.D., F.R.S., composed a philosophic volume of the same type. Have you heard the amount of Von Horn's royalties to date? No? I thought not. They total exactly fifty-six dollars and eighteen cents. Just see how deeply the public is interested in its life problems. Pah! I tell you it is left

to a few of us to do the work, and to do it among ourselves."

"I think you're wrong," persisted Hugh, and Puggleby could not help but like and admire him for this courage of conviction. "Imagine yourself an average man—"

"Oh, the devil with imagination," said Puggleby. "Imagination will some day be the ruin of you, Barclay. Anyway, what good would philosophy do the average man?"

Despite the seriousness of their topic, Hugh smiled.

"Try it, Doctor. Be an average man for just a moment," he urged. "Imagine yourself desirous of possessing the higher knowledge, yet devoid of that fundamental training so necessary to a clear understanding of scientific works. If such were the conditions, would you not welcome a popularly-phrased, non-technical journal of philosophy?"

He of the fierce whiskers was silent.

"Come," urged the Arizonian. "Wouldn't you?"

"Perhaps," rumbled Doctor Puggleby. "There may be a grain of truth in what you say; but the odds are enormously against you, sir. You would lose money on the venture."

"I am prepared to. I know I am not going astray here, for I love the work. I have no desire to get anything out of it." And Hugh felt like adding "Except a reputation and a bride," but refrained.

Puggleby waited.

"As for the good a magazine of this kind would be to the average man," continued Barclay, "you are well aware of the fact that there is nothing in the world so stimulating to the individual as mental gymnastics. Unlimber a man's mind, teach him to think scientifically, and you put success in his hand. And whether or not he believes in your premises makes little difference—so long as he understands."

"True. But—"

"And then I have a pet theory I'd like to put before the public. I call it my philosophy of destiny. It treats of the science of cause and effect. I believe what is to be, will be—not blindly, not unreasonably, but according to natural law—"

"An old belief. Half the world shares it."

"Vaguely, yes; but I have carried it to a conclusion. I have gone back to the primal atom—the first created speck of matter—for my proof. Consider, Doctor, the creation of the primal atom. It was brought into being possessed of two things: perpetual motion and the power of reproduction. Add to this, unlimited space in which to develop. And now, in your imagination, watch the thing grow."

The professor made a gesture of despair at this mention of imagination, and gave his whiskers a sudden, violent tug. Had he been a swearing man, he would, no doubt, have had recourse to a series of choice explitives.

"It isn't difficult to foretell the future of that original group of atoms, is it?" proceeded Hugh. "They whirl around in their own little orbits, busy with the work of producing others of their kind. A world is put together, atom by atom. . . Then more worlds. One begins to react on the other, just as people, today, react on one another. And a wonderful 'scheme of things' is evolved. In our own world, the varied geologic ages—steps in the stair of progress—come and go; each being the result of a past age and the cause of an age yet to come. Always we see the great natural law of cause and effect in operation. Kismet, destiny, inevitability, the will of God—all are the same. There is no such thing as chance. It is the working of the law."

"You are treading on dangerous ground—ground on which no cautious philosophers dare step at present," warned Puggleby, whose tone of voice was even louder than usual, indicating the extraordinary keenness of his interest.

"Radical, am I?" wondered the Westerner. "It's no fault of mine. You must blame my imagination, Doctor. And that, of course, refers you to my parents and my parents' parents —and to their environments and dispositions. Don't you see that what is to be, will be; and that one may just as well accept the inevitable with philosophic calm as to rail against it?"

"But to accept as you suggest would deprive men of initiative, of desire and ambition—"

"Not if the law provides them with these things. For example, some men are born to enact tragedy. Fate—the forces within their bodies and out of them—carry these men hither and thither until the force which is to prove their undoing is encountered. Such men might mentally resign themselves to the end, and yet fight like the very devil to escape it."

"I will admit that." The little pedagogue was being won over.

"The men did not want to die. Life was

their ideal. And everyone, you know, has his eyes on what seems to him ideal. That faculty is in itself a natural force—a force that works toward inevitable ends. The man in the desert strains toward his mirage. The mirage is unreal, but it represents water and he wants water and so it leads him astray—and his fate lies in its hands. But there are other hands back of the mirage, and so it goes, back, back to the primal atom . . . Life's a mirage. Its spice lies in the lure of what's ahead, and even though we made the world realize that all that is to be is based on that which has been, we could not take the spice away . . . But we might succeed in bringing about an age of saneness, for, as I have said, to understand cause and effect is to accept life with philosophic calm."

The argument continued for an hour or more. Slowly but surely Hugh Barclay battered down the Doctor's objections to his philosophy of destiny.

They turned again to the magazine.

"I cannot," boomed the diminutive professor, "consent to your wasting these views on an uninformed, careless-thinking, and unappreciative public. It would be wiser, I believe, to set out to capture the strongholds of contemporaneous philosophers and scientists, and by means of their accumulated effort gain popular acclaim."

Barclay shook his head. "The time has come for every man and woman to take up the burden of scientific thought," he declared. "If this is to be brought about, someone must blaze the way."

Doctor Puggleby surrendered completely. He said: "You have proven yourself a capable reasoner, Barclay. I cannot, therefore, hold your thoughts on the magazine lightly. As I see it, your success rests with Fate. I wish you luck."

"Thank you," murmured Hugh. He drew forth a cigar case and extended it toward Pug-

gleby. The little man selected a perfecto at random and returned the case. For several minutes, instructor and student gnawed at their weeds and puffed in silence.

Prolonged communion with Lady Nicotine at length restored to Doctor Puggleby's tongue its proper functions. Removing his cigar and regarding it as though it, too, were the embodiment of a problem, he said, "You will preach, I suppose, of the foolishness of the fear of death. Your philosophy implies as much."

"Death is, of course, only a change—not an end," descanted the Westerner, black eyes strangely dreamy as they peered through the smoke-haze. "It is but an aspect of life in the mass. Yes, I shall preach against the foolishness of fearing the inevitable change; but I'll not discourage love of life—that is, of life as we think we know it. Personally, I shall never fear death, yet always I love life more; and shall end my conscious activity with reluctance."

## MIRAGE

There came to Hugh as he sat and dreamed and talked, a picture of great stretches of desert and of table land. The colored cloud formations of an Arizona sunset lay before his eyes, and out of the mist that hung over all, grew the likeness of a large, squat mansion: a place that breathed of wife and children and of home. . . .

But a booming word from Doctor Puggleby broke the spell, and the picture vanished in cigar smoke.

## CHAPTER XIV

### TELLING THE WORLD

Given the initial impetus of Doctor Puggleby's acquiescence to his ideas, Hugh took a run and a jump into the work of magazine making. During these preparatory days he delighted in the mechanical details of the project. He was pleased to spend hours at a time estimating on the size of the book, its general appearance, its cost, and its possible sale; or, again, in sketching with fragmentary strokes the layout of the text pages.

With a carefully prepared dummy in his pocket, he made the rounds of half a dozen print shops and publishing houses. In one of the larger of these establishments the manager, a podgy gentleman who affected with only a fair degree of success, the bluff and hearty de-

portment of Western folk, insisted upon showing Hugh through his plant.

The Arizonian was attracted more by the plant than by its manager. At least thirty compositors were pecking away at their type cases, fingers flying here and there with a rapidity that commanded respect for the craft. Boys hurried from point to point with galleys of made-up pages for booklets and folders and magazines. To Hugh Barclay it seemed the shade of Gutenberg watched over the place; and Hugh was duly fascinated, for the metallic cry of the Monotypes and the clashing and banging of printing machinery was music to his ears. He felt himself drawn to it all, and knew not why, except that perhaps the smell of undried ink hinted at messages waiting to be dispatched 'round the world.

From the capacious-bodied manager came an unceasing flow of argument as to why Thought should blossom into print through his shop and no other. Barclay heard some

of the arguments, but was not affected adversely by them.

So, after a conference extending considerably over an hour, Hugh was inclined to feel that his search for a capable printing house was at an end.

"I believe you can handle this work of mine to advantage," he remarked to the manager. "Of course, your estimate—"

The manager slapped him on the back. "Don't worry," he bubbled. "The price will be right. You know, on these big jobs we can afford to be liberal, Mr. Barclay." And he chuckled and winked as though he were the author of as clever a coup de grace as had ever found performance in the business world.

Hugh went home. He dallied among the antiques, meaning to tell Allan of his progress, but Allan was busy trying to sell an art enthusiast something the enthusiast didn't want. After a moment of waiting, Barclay decided not to interrupt, and forthwith pro-

ceeded to his room to tackle the writing of an editorial.

He sat by the window, pad of yellow paper on his knee, fountain pen in hand. But the task was not an easy one. His mind struggled away from concentration, dwelling more fondly on a conglomeration of thoughts—thoughts of the girl he loved, thoughts of the silver goblet that was his father's, thoughts of printer's estimates, of Monotype machines and undried ink. . . .

But he fought on the side of concentration, and concentration won. He put pen to paper, and a little editorial flowed from the golden nib:

> I like to regard "Thought" as a medium for self-expression. I am not a public speaker. Yet I do want to talk—and to a large audience. I want to discuss the high points of a philosophy builded on science and imagination. I call it my philosophy of destiny. It deals with cause and effect. Hence this magazine.

Life—the force: the power behind this world, the impulse behind my pen, the understanding behind your eyes—this will supply my theme. And a red-blooded theme it is.

I want to feel, in every issue of this book, that I am writing a personal letter to you, my friend, and in so doing have a sympathetic audience for the thoughts that hammer away within my head, seeking outlet.

YOU are interested in life— past, present, and future—aren't you?

I am—intensely.

Let's mingle our thoughts across this page.

Warmed, now, to the work of composition, Barclay started an article on "Your Relation to the Primal Atom." This raced along in goodly fashion, the topic being one on which he fairly ached to express himself. Towards four o'clock it was finished. Just as he touched a period to the last sentence, Allan's voice called softly from the store below: "You're wanted on the phone, 'Clay. Shall I tell 'em you're out?"

"Who is it?" queried Hugh, hurrying to the head of the stairs.

"The MacBeth Printery. His nobs, the manager, speaking."

"Tell him to hold the wire. I'll be down directly." The Arizonian returned to his room and possessed himself of a sheaf of estimates which other printing houses had submitted him. Thus armed, he tackled the telephone.

"Hello! This is Barclay—"

"Yes, yes. How do you do, Mr. Barclay?" came the voice of the podgy manager over the wire. "I am Mr. Elder, manager of the MacBeth Printery. I have had our Mr. Hazlitt estimate on your job, and the figures strike me as being so very, very promising that I determined to call you up immediately and pass them on to you."

"Thanks for your interest, Mr. Elder."

"Tut! Tut! Don't mention it. Promptness is my middle name—one of the causes of my

success, don't you know. And now for the figures—"

And he named a price which Hugh found, by comparison with his sheaf of estimates, to be very reasonable.

"Draw up a contract," said the Westerner, without more ado. "I'll drop around some time tomorrow and sign it."

Hugh failed to hear Mr. Elder's effusive thanks. As he replaced the received on its hook, he felt a sudden surge of joy in merely realizing that his life-work was begun. After years of idle dreaming, after the failures that had been his in other lines of endeavor, after a long period during which ambition was forgotten and ways of least resistance always sought, this launching of a man-size undertaking was like being born again.

And to Eleanor Gage went the credit and the gratitude. No, not all the credit. Allan and his insistent letters were partly responsible. The letters had fairly dragged Hugh

into the East, and—by Jove, here was a good example of cause and effect. Back of Allan's letters was friendship—a college-born friendship. If Hugh had not attended college, he never would have met Allan, never heard of Eleanor, and, coincidentally, never set out on this quest for fame. Credit went, then, to his being a college man—and money was responsible for that—his father's money. Surely this was analyzing destiny with a vengeance. He probed deeper. Had not his father migrated from Virginia to Arizona at the close of the Civil War, Jim Montana and the silver mine would have been eliminated, the elder Barclay would certainly not have found the San Francisco girl, Cherry, who became his bride, and—

Here Hugh paused. He could trace no further the forces that affected him, without considering his family tree, and this he did not wish to do, because it brought to mind the mystery of his mother's identity. . . .

He spent that evening at the theatre with Eleanor.

"We're celebrating," he told her.

"Celebrating what?" she wondered.

"Why, celebrating the—er—ah—," he cast about in his mind for something they might be celebrating. He was not yet ready to tell of his journalistic activities. "Oh, yes—we're celebrating the arrival of a shipment of silver —silver dug from the Rockies by Jim Montana and properly smelted and moulded and weighed by him. I should say the shipment is valued at five or six thousand dollars—perhaps more."

The little blonde raised her eyebrows. To her, there was nothing significant in money, yet she felt the need of a comment. "You are a lucky, lucky man," she told him.

Hugh agreed, but he was looking at her and thinking only of her at the time.

It was well that Hugh enjoyed his little theatre party in the peacock's company, for three

weeks passed before they met again. During this interval the Arizonian remained secluded within his room, thinking frequently of her, it is true, but only in such spare moments as were left from the work of getting out the first issue of Thought.

And it meant work of the hardest sort—a new experience for Hugh, and one that made a different man of him. True, the business end of the enterprise was left almost entirely to Mr. Elder, and all matters relating to advertising were taken over by a prominent agency; yet the great bulk of the brain-labor was Barclay's, and he faced the driving strain of it with a will that surprised even Doctor Puggleby.

Write, write, write! Read, read, read! Paste, paste, paste! There was no end of tasks. They loomed before him early in the morning. They closed over him late at night. The days were too short.

He kept at it.

As to the literary side of the project—the process of putting his belief into understandable English—the Westerner was fortunately endowed with a facility of expression that cast defiance in the face of intricate, word-defying hypotheses. If this were not so, the game would have proven so very difficult of performance that Thought, as a journal, would doubtless have withered and died while still in its embryonic stage.

The various articles, long or short, that Hugh prepared for use in his magazine, earned commendation from Allan Scott chiefly on the basis of their "cheerful saneness." The phrase was well chosen. It described Hugh's attitude exactly. For, even when dealing with the inevitability of things—a subject that hovers always on the borderland of gloom—Barclay's work seemed to sing of a love for conscious life. Between the lines of everything

he wrote, unprinted words looked out and said: "This life of ours, in spite of its foreordained faults and pains and follies, is a mighty fine thing. Love it—and be conscious of that love. It is a great privilege."

What was to be the final result of all this labor? Barclay felt sure of his magazine, but not quite so sure of his public. He hoped for the best—was even inclined to believe that Fate was on his side—but to speak with certainty of the manner in which Thought would be received was quite beyond him.

The month of August had breathed its last when page-proofs of Thought, Volume I, Number I, were placed in Barclay's hands. They were delivered, in a heavy manilla envelope, by an errand boy from the MacBeth Printery's service department.

Attached by a paper clip to the proof of the cover design was a note from Mr. Elder. The note gave Hugh a thrill.

"Thanks for your interest, Mr. Elder."

My dear Mr. Barclay:—Before dispatching this packet of proofs to you, I skipped through them. I wanted to see what progress our house was making with your job. I got as far as page 9. After that, I forgot my intentions of conducting a critical business inspection: I didn't care a rap about make-up or type styles or anything else. All I wanted to do was read. That article on page 9 ("Our Oneness With the Universe") and the one on page 17 ("Your Relation to the Primal Atom") did the trick. Although I am a college graduate, I must admit it never entered my head to observe how one man's existence dovetails with the existence of all men. Nor had I, theretofore, looked upon mind as a universal force—a force made manifest through that delicate mechanical instrument, the brain—a force playing on atoms since the creation of atoms. These thoughts I left for other men. My business was to sell printing and nothing else. And I thought of nothing else. I ignored the fact that my constant dwelling on self was likely to effect others adversely. The result, I suppose, was quite apparent to you the very first day you called at the Mac Beth Printery. The shop was my world, the printing trade my universe. I had no other

interest. Life consisted of so much ego, ink, and paper. Time was reckoned by the landing of big jobs. Which would have been all right, probably, had I confined these feelings to the working day. But I did not. I took my work home with me. I was forever schemeing to land orders. And I succeeded. I made so much money on commission that I was taken into the firm. By that time I considered myself a "big" man. I continued to look upon myself as a very important figure until yesterday, when I read the first issue of "Thought." Now I am changing my mind. True, I still look upon my work as thoroughly worth while. It is good work, and just as necessary in the scheme of things as any other work; but I shall no longer allow it to claim all my time and all my thoughts. In future, I intend meeting men and making friends of them for other reasons than getting orders. To tell the truth, I have quite a list of personal improvements in view.

I suppose this reads as though I had "hit the trail." Well, I have. I suppose, too, that it all seems very sudden and inconsistent to you. Perhaps. But the fire of your arguments has communicated itself to me, and I followed my first impulse to write

and thank you for helping me find myself. As you yourself say, "it was to be." You see, I believe in your philosophy of destiny.

I am not writing these things because I have the honor of publishing "Thought." I am trying to be sincere. I would like to meet with you some day, Mr. Barclay, on other than a business basis.

I thank you, particularly, for giving to the public the two essays I have mentioned. The letter was signed "Herman Elder."

. . . . . .

Despite Mr. Elder's high opinion of Hugh's writings, Thought did not sell well on the news-stands. At the end of three months it was seen that the magazine promised nothing but financial failure. Hugh was in the glums, but swore to continue publication for at least a year, if it "broke him."

No doubt it would have sapped up a great deal of his money had not America's leading critic—one Hysen Hyman—arisen at this fortuitous moment and declared Barclay's magazine to be the best of its kind published in the English speaking countries.

Then the tide turned.

A demand for Thought had been created. The periodical began to sell, slowly at first, but with steadily gaining momentum.

## CHAPTER XV

### WEAVING THE SPELL

Allan's first excursion to the opera in Eleanor Gage's company was by no means his last. Eleanor saw to that. And Eleanor made herself so agreeable that the young antiquarian began thinking of her during business hours: a bad sign.

At the varied society affairs which he attended in the interest of his business, he was constantly meeting her. Occasionally she came in the company of the wealthy young sporting man, John James Fiske, but at such times was not above abandoning the notorious Mr. Fiske for the privilege of sitting alone with Allan.

Meanwhile, Hugh Barclay worked twelve hours a day earning the reputation that would ultimately make him worthy of the blonde beauty; but that little lady knew nothing of

his work. Even Allan Scott was unaware the Westerner's secret aspiration. So the trio lived in ignorance of one another's motives.

In spite of the trend of events, Allan could not forget Olive Henderson. She occupied much of his thoughts, and in sheer desperation at having lost her, he fell easy prey to the trap which Eleanor had prepared for him.

The Van Nordens, who had risen in society on the crest of an oil boom, were giving a house warming at their new summer home near Lyndham, and of course Eleanor Gage was invited. Eleanor passed the invitation on to Allan, suggesting that they motor out together in one of her father's cars.

Allan was undecided. Only a moment before the peacock phoned, he had been mentally comparing Olive and Eleanor, and for the hundredth time he called himself a fool for giving Olive up without insisting on an explanation. He still cared deeply for the brown-haired girl. In spite of broken friend-

ships, in spite of separation, in spite of the long silence that had come between them, this feeling for her remained intact—as did his stubbornness.

But he did accept, just as he had accepted a number of similar invitations in the past, for his periods of self communion invariably ended the same way: Olive and he were no longer on speaking terms; months had passed without so much as their seeing one another; their romance was at an end. This was irrevocable. Why, then, act the cloistered monk?

Lyndham Terrace, the latest whim of the Van Nordens, was too ostentatious to be home-like. The villa itself might have been mistaken for a house of parliament, while the garage, in Allan's opinion, resembled a Carnegie library. He said as much to Eleanor, who humorously threatened to expose him to his hostess.

There was much hand-shaking, and aimless conversation, and a great deal of strolling

about on the green lawn and through precisely trimmed gardens—and countless soft speeches between members of the younger set, for the microbe that makes one flirt was in the air.

Eleanor Gage was at her best that bright summer day. Not even the Van Nordens were accorded the attention paid the little blonde. Her beauty sent men scurrying after her, and gave the women plenty of opportunity for gossip.

Eleanor was careful not to slight Allan Scott. She gave other men just enough time and just enough attention to exhibit to Allan the demand that existed for her. Always she came back to the antiquarian with the conqueror's smile on her lips, and a light in her blue eyes that had set more than one man mad with desire.

The afternoon wore on, and dinner was announced. There was much brilliance and color

in the huge, frescoed room where the hundred or more guests found their seats. Small, circular tables fairly smothered with roses dotted the floor. Gems flashed on white breasts, and startling gowns drew the eye. . . . Conversation waxed lively. A lawn dance, promised for the evening, supplied the chief topic. It was something to look forward to after a long day dutifully spent.

From cocktails to demitasse, the dinner was regal in every particular. Little wonder, then, that Allan Scott should be affected by the opulence that surrounded him, and should gradually fall beneath the spell of the blonde beauty. . . .

Came the dance on the lawn, and the sound of music. . . and starlight. And white dresses ricochetted through the magic night. And laughter, and shuffling footsteps, and the clink of glasses filled the air.

Allan and Eleanor had concluded their third dance when a high-powered roadster came

chugging up the driveway. The ruddy-faced young man at the wheel was John James Fiske, who had promised to attend the house warming, provided he were allowed to come late.

Eleanor saw him before she herself was observed, and, confidently slipping her arm through Allan's, she said: "Come. It is so much nicer in the garden."

They strolled along the winding garden path, the moonlight full upon them, and shrubs and bushes and flower beds spreading grotesquely on all sides.

An iron settee presented itself, and, as though by mutual understanding, the couple sank into it. The strains of the orchestra came to their ears. Through the trees, a portion of the dance floor was visible, and, on it, the younger set whirled endlessly under a veritable net-work of red and yellow electric lamps. It was a background to inspire the madness of infatuation.

Allan and Eleanor talked in low tones. What they said was of no consequence. It is doubtful that either one remembered the other's words five minutes after they were uttered. Yet Allan was swayed as he never had been swayed by an orator. The seductive murmur of the girl's voice, the wonderful coloring of those eyes that rivalled the deeps of Lake Tahoe, the glinting of moonbeams on her coiffure—this, and the soft feel of her beside him, enthralled his senses and carried him away in a whirl of false adoration.

"The day has been a glorious one," sighed Eleanor. "I wish—"

"Yes? What do you wish?" with rash eagerness.

"I don't know that I should tell you, inquisitive sir," she chided him.

"But why? Shouldn't I know?"

"Oh, yes."

"Then—"

"Well, it's only—that I wish there might be

other days like this—many, many of them—"

"Eleanor!" His voice was hoarse. He was losing his grip. One arm arose above the iron settee and encircled the peacock's shoulders. He bent forward to look in her eyes, but the lids were lowered, and the cheeks flushed. She seemed more wonderful than ever before, as she lay quietly in the curve of his arm. The scent of perfume came to him—her perfume. And the barrier between them broke. . . .

He held her close to him, and pressed his lips to hers.

"Allan! Allan!" she cried softly, simulating protest, yet making no effort to withdraw from his arms.

Footsteps sounded on the walk. Instantly the pair separated.

Allan, ashamed that he had given way to his heart-hungry impulses, arose and awaited the stranger's approach.

The stranger swaggered up to him. A cigarette dangled from his rather thick nether

lip. The ruddiness of his complexion was apparent even in the half light.

"Ah—Mr. Fiske?" Scott thoroughly disliked the sportive millionaire, and made no bones about it.

"I've come," declared John James, flipping his unfinished cigarette into a nearby hedge, "I've come to claim a dance with Miss Gage."

Allan looked at Eleanor. Their big moment had been spoiled—by destiny. There was really nothing to do but submit as amiably as possible.

"Very well, Mr. Fiske," said Allan, bringing forth his dance program. "Which number will it be?'

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE RAKISH YOUNG MAN AGAIN

"Consider the mirage," said Hugh. "It is a metaphor for life as we see it."

Allan and the Arizonian lounged in the rear of the Scott Galleries, enjoying an habitual bed-time smoke, and engaging, desultorily, in talk of the West and in philosophical discussion. A clock under the shadowy balcony had chimed the hour of twelve, yet neither man made effort to retire. The evening papers lay unopened in Allan's lap. Conversation more interesting than the current news delayed perusal.

"We see life falsely, more often than not," continued Hugh. "Falsity, too, is the very essence of the mirage. For the mirage leads astray. It prevents us from achieving a desire—whether that desire be the gaining of

a town, a water-hole, or what not—by instilling the false belief that achievement is near at hand. . . . Once I wanted only to be alone and dream—dream for the joy of dreaming, like the opium smoker. That was my mirage. It led me away from material success. Then it was pointed out to me that to be successful, as the world sees success, I must direct my dreams into material channels. I did so, and my dream of destiny was evolved, and the magazine. In doing these things, I may or may not have created another and larger mirage. . . I do not know. . . I do not know where this new thing is leading me. So far it has led where I wanted to go. Destiny, the great oracle, alone may be sure of the future."

"Sometimes I think we live and thrive on falsities," averred Allan, gazing contemplatively at a display case filled with old timepieces. "We love our mirages, our dreams, our unrealities. And usually the man is lucky who sees only the picture in the sky, and pre-

serves it and dies with it. He may be led astray from the cold truth, but he'll be happy —believe me, he will. . . . Tell a collector that half his antiques are modern and you shatter a dream that pleased. Deliberately inform an old inventor that his much-tinkered-over mechanism is a ridiculous top, and bang! goes his interest in life. Isn't it so, 'Clay?"

"Yes, Allan, it is. And the mirage, of course, typifies—"

"I've never actually seen a mirage. I should like to, though. They're hazy, I suppose, and distorted—"

"At times, yes. Or they may be double, or even upside down. Again, I have seen them as clear as crystal, and with no wave outlines to mar their seeming reality. One of these I observed the day before I came East in answer to your invitation."

"Was it the reflection of a lake? A clump of bushes? Rocks?"

"It was something even more picturesque—

for a mirage. Many miles away, in a sort of hollow, caused by the gradual depression of the land on the southwestern fringe of the desert, lies a toy-like town called Red Dog. The place was built around a little stream of water that bubbles out from the foothills. It is an oasis much appreciated by travelers going in that direction. There's a saloon, a general store, and a score of dobe houses and huts scattered along the wide main street. It was this village—houses and street and all—that transformed itself into my mirage."

"You saw the whole town reflected, right side up, in the sky?"

"I did. And had I not known that Red Dog was hidden from view by the earth's depression, I would have sworn I had come in sight of the town itself. . . . By the bye, Allan, the Moquis of Red Dog have circulated an odd belief concerning this mirage. To see it three times is regarded as the sign of a curse from on high. . . . I have seen it twice."

Scott whistled. "Once more, and you're booked for a cursing, eh?"

"It would seem so."

They lapsed into silence. A moment later, Allan said: "Have you heard from your Indian helper recently—Jim-what's-his-name?"

"Oh, yes. He scribbles a note occasionally, urging me to return to Arizona. Says the sky is bluer, the air warmer, and the bungalow more peaceful than ever before. . . . He complains of growing old. Rheumatism's got him. . . . A good old fellow: Jim."

The talk lagged. Allan turned to his unopened newspaper. He scanned the headlines on page one, saw nothing of interest there, and, opening the paper, proceeded slowly from page to page, reading scattered items as he went: "Transit Loan Agreed Upon," "Subway Cave-in Kills Three," "Madame Dieulafoy Permitted by French Court to Wear Masculine Attire," and so on.

Hugh studied the multi-colored rug at his

feet. Not that he was interested in the color scheme particularly — for he wasn't — but rather because each little dot in the finely woven texture represented a real, live reader of Thought. He was wondering, at that very moment, if the readers of his magazine would be as numerous as the dots in the rug. He hoped they would.

Meanwhile, Allan Scott continued his perusal of the newspaper. In time he came upon the sporting page. Here he lingered, as was his wont.

The heading "One-Round Hazlitt to Meet Spike Callahan" greeted him. . . . Something familiar here. Where had he heard the name Callahan before? He glanced at the illustrations illuminating the news-story; there were a dozen of them. The largest captured his attention. It pictured the massive-jawed, hard-eyed visage of Spike Callahan, and under it appeared the caption: "New Star in Pugilistic Firmament Whose Challenge

Found Ready Acceptance." Around this reproduction of the new star's countenance were grouped other photographs, but the antiquarian was blind to them—quite blind—for, in the face that sneered up at him from the center of the printed page, he had caught a resemblance to—

"Well, I'm blessed if it isn't our old friend, the chauffeur!" exclaimed Allan, loudly. His open palm came down on the newspaper with a resounding whack; whereupon Hugh's eyes left the multi-colored rug and traveled to his friend's face.

"Look!" cried Scott, shoving the sporting page under the Westerner's nose. "Look who has climbed the ladder of success and achievement. You ought to know him—you licked him. It's the chap who gave me a black eye."

Barclay smoothed the rumpled paper and held it where the light would fall upon it with most effectiveness. He studied the picture. "You're right," he said. "It is the chauffeur."

Hugh did what Allan failed to do. He looked at the other photos. And then he arose and said, quietly, "Let's go to bed." But he took the paper with him.

A trifle surprised that their talk should be so abruptly terminated, yet with no disposition to be inquisitive, Allan followed his friend upstairs, bade him good-night at his door, and left him.

Alone in his room, Hugh sat on the edge of the bed and gazed at the pictured features of a man who was designated as "Spike Callahan's Millionaire Manager," and as he gazed his mind was transported from the present into the past. He found himself on the ice-capped river, skating about with long, easy strokes, in search of a girl with a blue tam o'shanter. At length he discovered her—singled her out from the great mass of darting, sliding, slipping humanity. But she was not alone. She was accompanied by a rakish young man. They were holding hands, as

skaters do. And they talked and laughed gaily as they cut through the cold air. . . .

And the rakish young man was Spike Callahan's manager!

Mechanically, and quite as if there was nothing else left to do, Hugh read the story of the coming fight. It started off with the sporting writer's usual breezy rush of words:

> Well, it's settled. Two of the most promising youngsters in the middleweight class will meet here Monday night, July 30, to decide once and for all which has the better right to demand a bout with McComb, the present champion. These doughty contenders for the laurel wreath are One-Round Hazlitt, the Australian fistic wizard, and Spike Callahan, ex-chauffeur, whose recent battles have made him the idol of local fight fans.

Despite O-R Hazlitt's international

reputation, the fans here are strong boosters for Callahan, and a wagon load of money will be bet at the ringside. In the opinion of the writer, the Australian has the edge. In addition to a savage kick with either hand, Hazlitt is both clever and cautious. Though not lacking in gameness, he believes that it is better to give a blow than to take one. On the other hand, Callahan — as is often the case with young fighters—loses his head at times, and indulges in sudden mad rushes. . . .

Johnny Fiske, multi-millionaire sporting man, whose fad is managing fighters, will direct the bout from Callahan's corner. If he can prevail upon and assist his protege's power of repression by hurling adjectives at him, it is possible that Spike may emerge from the fray victorious.

There was more of this, but Hugh had read enough. He dropped the newspaper on the floor and kicked it into a corner. He was both disgusted and disappointed. It was bad enough to have observed the girl he loved in company with a man such as John James Fiske, but it was far worse to imagine her receiving attentions from him.

His love for Eleanor Gage never wavered. He was inclined to blame it on the rakish young man. Yet, as the minutes wore away, he went even so far as to soften his feelings toward this wealthy habitue of the prize ring who wore loud plaids, and skated with the only girl in the world, and who must perhaps be regarded as a rival. He might be an all-right fellow at heart? Who knew?

This was Hugh's way: to give others, whether rounders or parsons, the benefit of the doubt. . . .

The following morning, Allan Scott exhibited marked eagerness in his perusal of the

sporting page. Now he, too, found the photo of John James Fiske, but said nothing of it, for of course Hugh could have no interest in this man. Hugh and Allan rarely talked personalities. Perhaps, if they had, both would have been vastly surprised.

However, Allan's interest took definite form. "What do you say," he suggested, "to buying a couple of good seats and watching our friend Callahan fight the Australian?"

Hugh was in the same mood. "Not a half bad idea," he responded. "I'll attend to the matter myself."

## CHAPTER XVII

### DESTINY LENDS A HAND

Olive was very lonely. Time had failed to heal the scar of broken friendship. The passing months, full of the memory of happy moments in Allan's company, served only to abrade the wound. And Olive longed to be with him again.

Her stubbornness was weakening. What if Allan had taken a drink? It was the way of men. After all, she loved him none the less because of it. Half a year without him had proven that.

But there were difficulties in maintaining this view. First came remembrance of the absinthe lover who died for his love. She shuddered at thought of it. . . . Then, pride. And honest pride was by no means an inconsequential trait in Olive Henderson. Allan was much like her in this respect. How, then,

considering these things, might a re-adjustment be effected? How might the old relationship be born again?

Day after day she grappled with the problem, and slowly approached what she considered a solution.

The first step toward a possible re-union lay in the suddenly remembered fact that she hadn't allowed Allan to tell his story. There he had stood—poor fellow—bewildered, apparently at a loss to account for his sweetheart's attitude toward him. And she, in anger, had sent him away. It was wrong. She had been a little fool.

Not that she doubted Eleanor Gage. Eleanor's story of the barroom brawl was unquestionably true in every detail. It would have seemed silly to Olive at that time to suspect the peacock of duplicity, for the peacock and she had been better friends since the separation than before it. However, she admitted now, that in fairness to Allan, she

could have done little less than hear his story.

And this reminded her that Eleanor had received the details of the whole miserable affair from Hugh Barclay. Perhaps exaggerations had crept in in the telling. Here was another source of speculation.

Olive thought of going direct to Hugh, but upon cogitating the matter, it occurred to her that an interview such as she planned would belittle her in the eyes of both Allan and Hugh: to see her pursuing, with no regard to dignity nor modesty, the man she loved. She went home and cried.

At the blackest moment, light came.

From the beginning she had failed to consider one of the chief characters in the brawl —the chauffeur. Now, like an expanding genii he occupied her mind.

Find the chauffeur! That was the solution. Why it was the solution, she didn't exactly know, except that he could give an authentic

version of the fight—in short, that he could tell Allan's story for him.

Finding a nameless chauffeur (who happened no longer to be a chauffeur) presented numberless obstacles. Olive's hopes and plans might have collapsed and ended here, had not the great oracle planned it otherwise.

One day the doorbell buzzed, and Destiny in the person of Eleanor Gage, arrayed in her latest Parisian afternoon frock, entered the hall.

"So glad you're home, Olive," cried the little blonde. "There's a perfectly delightful adventure in store for us if—if—No, I won't remove my hat. Really, I haven't time—"

Olive bundled her into the long, narrow parlor, pushed her gently into a chair . . . and became very attentive.

The peacock toyed with her rings. She was obviously uncertain as to just how to begin. Finally she said: "You know, Olive, I am al-

ways eager for a new and startling experience—"

"Well?" Olive waited, her brown eyes large with inquiry.

"I like society," rambled Eleanor, as she studied the tips of her gray kid pumps, "but there are times when a run of stupid functions make me impatient for other scenes—scenes removed as far as possible from reception halls, and lorgnettes, and all that sort of thing."

"Yes?"

"Of course, I must guard my moves. The horrid newspapers are always and forever prying into experiences that seem the least bit out of the ordinary. A little frolic, a little lark by one of the four hundred—and the world hears of it."

Olive nodded. She wondered where the conversation was leading. She wondered, too, for the hundredth time, why a wealthy young

woman of Eleanor's type bothered with a middle class girl like herself.

"I have chafed under this restraint—and—and—well, for weeks I've wanted—"

The resplendent little blonde paused, and began again. "I don't suppose," she experimented, "I don't suppose you have ever attended a prize fight?"

"No. And I never want to attend one," said Olive, but added thoughtfully: "Why?"

Eleanor arose. "Of course, if you feel that way about it, there is little use of my talking to you," she replied, irritably. "Really, I am afraid I must be going—"

Olive, who had been taken aback by this outbreak, placed the entire blame upon herself, and hastened to amend matters.

"Forgive me, Eleanor," she urged. "I had no intention of incivility. It was thoughtless of me. If I seemed contrary, I'm sorry. Won't you sit down?"

With apparent reluctance, the peacock

wended her way back to the wide arm chair. Again she launched the half-tabooed topic: "I have a very wealthy friend who is interested in all manner of sport. As a matter of fact, he occupies himself entirely with that sort of thing. He is a dashing, witty, self assertive sort of fellow. All the debutantes are secretly in love with him. . . . I told him of my spell of ennui, and, as an antidote, he suggested a prize fight. Said he would smuggle me into the press box as a woman reporter—'sob sister' or some such silly name, I believe he used."

"How thrilling," said Olive, trying to be agreeable. "Are you really going, then?"

"I told John James that I couldn't quite bring myself to do the thing alone, but that I would come with a friend."

"Oh!" gasped Olive. She understood now.

"It is arranged for Monday evening," Eleanor hurried on. "And—and it's going to be a very big fight, don't you know. Mr. Fiske is managing one of the contestants: a chap by

the name of Callahan, who was once a chauffeur—"

"A chauffeur!"

"Yes. Why? Is there anything strange in that?" It was plain that the whole chauffeuring fraternity meant nothing to Eleanor.

"Well, no—of—course not." But Olive was interested. For two weeks or more she had been peering at taxi-cabs and stealthily observing all men who wore the badge. She felt that her future happiness was in the keeping of a chauffeur. "Do—do you know, Eleanor, if he ever worked in this city?"

"I haven't the least idea. He had already made good in the ring before Mr. Fiske adopted him." The peacock was impatient to return to the matter of attending the bout, and in the flush of her eagerness she failed to see the cause of Olive's peculiar question. The thought of Spike Callahan being even remotely connected with her own life was undreamed of. The chauffeur of Hugh's story had never

assumed human shape in her mind. She had always regarded him as she would have regarded a fiction personage. Unlike Olive, she had not even deigned to look at the sullen driver on the night of the Arts and Crafts ball.

"Mr. Fiske will introduce us to this Callahan, who is a really great boxer. And he will also show us to our seats—and—and there's nothing at all to be frightened about. Come, Olive! Will you accompany me? We'll dress in plain black clothes and be women reporters for a night. Surely it will be worth experiencing—the atmosphere, the romance of our situation, the fight—"

Eleanor's final, unthinking reference to hostilities all but lost her case, for Olive lacked the touch of daring that individualized the peacock. She shuddered away from the thought of battle. But the mere idea that Spike might be the man she sought—and it seemed possible, considering his pugilistic inclinations—

urged her to acceptance. She could meet this ex-chauffeur in no other way—and perhaps more important things than prim conduct lay in the balance.

The blonde beauty waited Olive's decision. She was quite unaware of the lines being drawn about her by the hand of fate. She knew for a fact that she was afraid of being the only woman in the press box. No other thought came to her during those minutes of waiting. And yet she was eager to experience the sensations attending an affair of this kind. It was the Roman Coliseum over again.

"I'll go—gladly," she bravely fibbed.

"Bravo! It's settled, then," cried Eleanor. "I'll call for you in my car at seven-thirty, Monday evening. And remember—no frills. Dress as sedately as you know how."

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE FIGHT AND WHAT FOLLOWED

It was, in truth, a big night at the American Athletic Club. The din of jubilant fight fans, talking, yelling, and scuffling their way down the aisles, the banging of chair seats as they were flipped from a vertical to a horizontal plane, the cries of cigar and cigarette venders mingled and rose through the smoke-filled air in one raucous note.

This bedlam of sound found its way through open windows to the street, where hundreds of sport enthusiasts clamored for immediate admittance and pushed and shoved until the nervous little ticket-seller in the box office was almost beside himself with anger and despair: it seemed to him that half the crowd had squeezed by without paying.

The excitement communicated itself to the

dressing rooms, where several of the preliminary fighters were already in their togs and waiting to be called. It manifested itself in a sort of hyper-tension that clutched at everybody's vitals; but no one would admit that it existed. Even men who were comparatively new at the game assumed careless attitudes and tried to look bored.

Hard-visaged helpers flew hither and thither on errands of tremendous import. Loafers who rarely worked, sweated themselves blue in the face hunting for something to do that would bring them in close proximity with any or all of the fighters. It was unquestionably a big night—a night to talk about for years after.

Spike Callahan was there. So was his millionaire manager, the rakish Mr. Fiske. Spike was attired in his street clothes. He would don trunks later. There was plenty of time. His bout—the big bout—"went on" at ten-twenty. It was now only eight-fifteen.

Fighter and manager were talking together in low tones when a youngster entered and cast a half scared, half shy glance around the high-ceilinged room. Eyeing Spike, he ambled forward, hat in hand, awed by the great presence.

"Yes—yer—that is, Mister Callahan, an' Mister Fiske—are—wanted in the—office," gasped the little ragamuffin.

"Who wants us? Russ Dickens?" demanded Spike's manager. Dickens was the owner of the club.

The kid nodded eagerly. "Yeh. An' there's two ladies there," he supplemented.

Ignoring the youthful message bearer, who, quite naturally, expected nothing else from men so big and grand, Fiske and the ex-chauffeur strode away. . . .

At that moment, Russ Dickens' spacious though meagerly furnished office presented an interesting study in scenic effects. Two girls, doubly beautiful in the unostentatious clothes they wore, sat on chairs which had been hur-

riedly brought for them. In odd corners of the room loitered young men who strove to prolong their departure by pretending to be immersed in very important business discussions; their true object was to feast glutonous eyes on the visitors' faces.

Startled into uneasiness by the boisterous clamor for the hall and by the exclusively masculine environment in which they found themselves, Olive and Eleanor fidgeted in their chairs and vainly tried to make suitable replies to Mr. Dickens' conversational advances.

The rakish young man entered, Callahan at his heels.

Eleanor Gage started up, relieved to catch a glimpse of at least one familiar face in this tidal wave of strangers.

"Hello, there!" grinned John James Fiske. "I didn't know whether to expect you or not. Glad you didn't lose your nerve."

Eleanor flushed with pleasure, as though an

exquisite compliment had found utterance. Quickly, breezily, they clasped hands.

The peacock beckoned to Olive, who now came forward.

"I want you to meet Mr. Fiske, Olive," said the little blonde. "He is the gentleman we have to thank for this experience. Mr. Fiske, Miss Henderson, of the Evening News."

All three laughed.

Spike Callahan paused on the threshold, and John James, suddenly remembering, darted back, returning with the fighter in tow.

"Meet the great and only Callahan, ladies," bowed Fiske, his ruddy complexion growing even more ruddy from this trifling exertion. "Shake hands with the next middleweight champion of the world."

At sight of the protruding jaw, the small, half-shut eyes, the close-cropped hair of Spike Callahan, Olive's heart leaped, and a wave of faintness came over her. "It is he! It is he!" she cried -exultantly to herself, recalling the

face that once had glowered down upon a group of four merrymakers from the driver's seat of a taxi-cab. . . .

Yet could she be sure of this? She must question him. And here she all but lost the atom of nerve that had so far sustained her.

Greetings over, the ex-chauffeur rocked uneasily on his huge feet, much like an animal suddenly deprived of its natural environment. In spite of her timidity, Olive realized that it was a propitious moment to begin operations.

Immediately she strove, as artlessly as possible, to detach Spike Callahan from the group. This was not difficult, for Fiske unconsciously helped by edging toward a window with Eleanor and pointing out the mob that still surged about the gates.

"Mr. Callahan," began Olive in a trembling whisper, "you—you were a chauffeur—once upon a time, weren't you?"

"Uh-huh," nodded Spike. He was not ashamed of early beginnings. If anything,

they emphasized his rise. "I had me taxi stand down in the hotel district."

This admittance made it easy for the question that followed. "C-can you remember as far back as six or eight months ago?" persisted Olive. "Think hard, Mr. Callahan—please. Do you recall a trip with two girls and two young men—a trip that—that culminated in a fight?"

"Sure I remember," said the fighter. "I ought to. I nearly got pinched."

Olive's heart hammered so loudly she felt sure it must have dilated to undue proportions. She sought to lessen its thump by putting her hands to her breast. Spike must not hear. He might grow suspicious and refuse to talk.

"P-please don't think me impolite," she desperately pursued, "but were—were—had you been drinking?"

To Olive it seemed that all natural laws were suspended, as the universe paused in its end-

less whirl and hung breathlessly on Spike's answer.

"Nope," he declared. "That was the trouble. If I'd had a couple of drinks I wouldn't ha' been so grouchy; and if I hadn't ha' been so grouchy, I wouldn't ha' started no fight—"

"But why—why did you want to fight?" Olive was at a loss. Things had taken such an unexpected turn.

"Aw, y'know how it is wit shofers." Spike was very frank now that he was no longer one of the guild. "When a guy looks soft, they soak 'im a good, stiff fare, an' if he don't pony up—biff!"

The coming middleweight champion didn't know why they were chatting about the good, old days, and he didn't stop to analyze. He was not an easy talker—conversation always assumed a hateful, formidable aspect in his eyes—yet he knew it was expected of him, and for this pretty girl's sake he was willing to sweat out the words. He therefore utilized

the first subject that came to hand. It was as good as any, he calculated.

"But these men—invited you into a saloon, did they not?" The little, brown-haired girl was very inquisitive. Vaguely, Spike wondered why.

"Nothin' like it," denied Spike. "I tried to overcharge 'em an' they wouldn't stand for it. So I pasted one of em in the eye—an'—an' then a cop—But what the deuce—?"

"Thank heavens!" whispered Olive. Her face was white as alabaster. Spike, frightened at the change that had come over her, manifested a species of helplessness raised to the n-th power. He forgot to bring a chair, to offer a glass of water, to do anything but stare and stutter and finally turn toward John James Fiske. But Olive stopped him with a hand on his arm . . . and found the chair herself.

She was dazed. Spike's innocent revelation changed the whole aspect of things. First, it

killed for all time the stubbornness that had been hers. Oh, the wasted hours! The long, weary exile from the man she loved! Stubbornness! Stubbornness! She felt a stab of remorse as the memory of her treatment toward Allan flooded back upon her. But that was over now. She would make it up a thousand times—if he would take her back. Then came the second stab—one of sudden anger toward the responsible party. Eleanor or Hugh—or both—had caused this breach between Allan and herself. Someone had lied—deliberately, wilfully. Olive's confidence in human nature was severely shaken at that moment. And, uncertain as she was of the guilty one, a poignant sense of disappointment in Eleanor welled within her. . . .

Ruddy Johnny Fiske, in his tweeds and his diamonds, approached, the peacock on his arm. Olive got to her feet, and waited. She felt the urge to begin her denunciations then and there, but prudence came to her at this

critical time and argued delay. A poor place, this, to settle intimate disputes. And further, her faculties were in such a state that coherent thought was quite impossible.

Eleanor drew two stenographer's notebooks from her purse and handed one to Olive. This was the sole property of their journalistic ruse.

"I think," observed Spike's manager, "I think it would be a good idea for you girls to get to your seats right away. There's a big bill on tonight—a splendid bill from beginning to end. And if you take my advice, you'll not miss a single bout—they're that good. Am I right, Spike?"

"Yeh," agreed the one-time chauffeur, dully.

Olive meant to refuse to go further with the adventure, but she was too bewildered to frame a plausible objection, without dragging in the burning topic of duplicity.

Spike Callahan bade them a gruff good-bye and departed for his dressing room. The rak-

ish young man stationed himself between them, a hand on each of their elbows, and off they started: through the office door, into the corridor, past an usher who fell back at Fiske's command, and down an aisle of the noise-filled hall.

The press section, down by ringside, was full to overflowing. Sporting writers from a dozen cities had congregated here to put the Hazlitt-Callahan bout on paper. Already fountain pens were busy, scribbling introductions, computing the gate receipts, ensnaring local color.

There was no room for newcomers. The girls saw that. Fiske saw it; but Fiske meant to appeal to the chivalrous side of the newspaper men. Two of them might be persuaded to move back into the audience: a few scattered ringside seats still were vacant.

Eleanor read John James' intention on his face . . . and felt a nervous sinking within her. She did not wish the reporters' attention drawn to her. Recognition might follow

—and scandal. Gladly she would have turned about and quit the place but for fear of Fiske's raillery. She wanted Fiske to think her game.

"Don't!" she said, with difficulty maintaining a nonchalant tone. "Don't try to get us in there. I'd rather not, you know. What prevents us taking these seats?" She pointed to the second row.

"Nothing at all. They're yours if you want them. I'll arrange it with the gateman on my way out. Now get your notebooks ready, girls, and make some little pretense at earning your living on a yellow sheet. No one will bother you. As newspaper women, you're perfectly safe here. And, by George, you'll boast of this experience at many an insipid dinner party. . . . I'll be down to see you again before our fight goes on."

John James disappeared from view. For a brief space of time the two young women heard his footsteps clattering along the aisle, then this too was gone, and, in spite of the

thousands of spectators on every side, Olive and Eleanor felt a scary sort of loneliness—the loneliness that comes of seeing no familiar faces, of being girls in a seething mass of men—settle heavily upon them.

Olive glanced cautiously around. Men! Men! Everywhere they were hemmed in by men. And many of the countenances were not of a kind to reassure. She looked dazedly into faces that betokened idleness, and others that advertised brutal and sensuous characters. She saw, also, faces of business men bent on the first lap of a mild spruce; of fat, pompous politicians; of wealthy rounders; and of pallid youths. All in all it was a motley assemblage. She shuddered.

The rows of faces oppressed her. She turned to the details of the hall—its immense size, its roped ring in the center, its balconies sloping off from all four walls—but there was no escaping the faces. She imagined them coming again and again to leer at her. And there was

no relief, until at last the lights went out and plunged everything but the ring in darkness.

Now that the ring alone remained visble, Olive mechanically observed the preparations that were taking place there. Two fighters, wrapped in bath robes, had clambered through the ropes. They were followed by a small mob of officials. . . . Announcements were made and praises sung.

Olive tried to get her mind off those fear-impelling faces in the audience, off her troubles, off her growing distrust and dislike of Eleanor by watching the preliminary fights. . . . Then something happened that no one—not even John James Fiske—had reckoned upon.

A man squeezed into the seat on Eleanor's left. He was a stocky, red-nosed fellow of middle age or thereabouts. He had been drinking. His breath perfumed the air for several rows roundabout, but no one seemed to mind. It was his privilege.

This person set about entertaining everyone with tipsy remarks. The spectators manifested a laughing interest in his thick-tongued witticisms and ridiculous actions. He began on the fighters, but soon turned his hic-coughing remarks on the girls, observing with feigned solemnity that "women are shirtenly c-comin' into their own."

Eleanor stared haughtily at the dancing figures in the squared circle. She felt the coarse-grained plebian beneath notice. . . . Olive trembled so that her notebook fell from her fingers. The old fear of the absinthe lover swept over her. . . .

"Awful p-pretty kid, that—awful pretty," asserted the bleary-eyed one, wagging his head toward Eleanor. "What brand a' beauty dope d'y use, kid? Hey?"

Eleanor sat just as Marie Antoinette must have sat in the tumbrel that bore her to the guillotine: erect and scornful.

The man leaned closer. His hot, whiskey-

laden breath came forth in gusts. He plucked a stale, half burned cigar from between his teeth, regarded it with surprise, then cast it into the aisle. An instant later the palm of his hand crashed down on Eleanor's knee, "Les—les you an' I be pals," he wheezed. "Les—"

He stopped right there. A noise considerably louder than the one preceding it brought a dozen occupants of nearby seats to their feet. They saw the drunken man struggling to rise. They saw him with a hand on his cheek. For Hugh Barclay, pushing his way to the aid of the persecuted young women, had lashed out at their tormentor and left a mark on him.

The crowd surged upward, billowed into the aisle and rolled toward the scene of the disturbance.

Those in back set up a private uproar of their own.

"Sit down!"

"Put 'im out!"

"Wot's the big idea?"

"C'on, you boobs! Down in front!"

"He hit me wi' brass knuckles," screamed the enraged tippler. "He—he—"

The tippler had friends. They started in on Barclay. Allan Scott ranged himself by Hugh's side, and a general fight ensued. Hundreds of rounders, and pallid youths, and bruisers, and business men engaged in it without knowing why. The prize fighters stopped their battle to watch the spectators. And the spectators had a splendid time banging fiercely away at each other until the police came. It was in truth a big night at the American Athletic Club. It is doubtful that ever before the American Athletic Club enjoyed a bigger night.

Hugh Barclay, in the capacity of defender, played havoc with all who interfered. He had as many arms as Medusa had snakes. Allan, fighting near him, marvelled at his friend's chain lightning style of attack, marvelled, too,

at the fires that leaped in his eye, and subconciously likened him to a savage mad with the lust to kill.

Olive and Eleanor, in the thick of this whirling vortex of human forms, found themselves unable to move. Arms crooked above their heads, they sought protection from the tempest.

Came a cry from the back of the house: "Cheese it—the bulls!"

Just as a horse rears its head to a sudden pull of the reins, so Hugh Barclay drew himself erect and peered out over the heaving, wiggling shoulders of the mob. Jove, it was true! A squad of bluecoats, clubs drawn, had entered the hall.

Crying for Allan to follow his example, the Westerner dove through the crowd, grasped Eleanor Gage by the wrist, and ran up the aisle, smashing a pathway as he went. It seemed they were going straight into the jaws of the police, and for a moment Eleanor hung

back. But Hugh had no intention of running the gauntlet. He had caught sight of a row of unoccupied seats—and headed for them. Allan Scott, supporting Olive in the crook of his arm, observed his chum's action and sensed the game immediately. They were to play the part of innocent spectators.

Not an instant too soon, all four dropped into seats. The girls, weakened and half distracted, sagged against their chair backs, while Hugh and Allan, though mystified by the presence of Eleanor and Olive, and burning with questions that might explain the whole extraordinary affair, proceeded to feign undivided interest in the riot. . . .

The police rushed by. They struck the mob like a well trained football team bucking the line. Down came the clubs. Crack! Crack! Each impact clearly audible. Screams and cries of rage filled the hall.

Hugh waited no longer, but, with his little party in charge, was up and away again. They

did not run. They walked, quickly—just as quickly as they could without attracting undue attention.

They were stopped at the door by an officer. "Sit down," he said, briefly. "Y' may be among those wanted. Wot's the 'skirts' doin' here, anyway?"

Allan's heart sank. "All our efforts for nothing," he groaned to himself. "Our pictures will decorate the front page of every newspaper in town—and perhaps the rogues' gallery. Oh, Lord!"

A familiar voice boomed in Allan's ear: "Mr. Scott, as I live! So you came to see Callahan at last, eh?"

The antiquarian turned to find Cassidy, patrolman and ardent fight fan, at his elbow. He drew a long sigh of relief. "You're an angel descended from heaven, Cassidy," he smiled, weakly. "Come! Vouch for us. Your compatriot seems to doubt our good intentions."

Cassidy faced the officer at the door. "It's all right, Brodie," he said. "Leave 'em past."

So they went out into the night, free—to face another big moment in their lives.

## CHAPTER XIX

### RE-ADJUSTMENT

A police patrol tarried by the curb. . . . The group of four scurried guiltily toward a side street. They were disheveled, all of them —and anxious to avoid notice.

"Wait here," whispered Hugh. "I'll call a taxi." And before Eleanor could stop him with the information that her own car was parked nearby, the Westerner had disappeared in the shadows.

A peculiar reticence possessed Olive Henderson. Allan, too, was ill at ease. Eleanor, on the other hand, waxed talkative.

"How fortunate, Allan, that you and Mr. Barclay were on hand," she cried, trying to appear unmoved by the turn events had taken. "It was very much like a play, wasn't it—with

the hero turning up in the nick of time and all that sort of thing?"

Allan nodded. His eyes were on Olive. There was an intense longing in them—the old longing.

"How did it happen that you were there?" he asked at length. "A prize fight is no place for young ladies."

"A lark—an adventure," explained the peacock, lightly. "We went in the guise of newspaper women, seeking material."

"Well, you got it," observed Scott, drily. "I'll admit society wouldn't be very exciting but for a few diversions of that character. But you, Olive—"

"I didn't go because I craved excitement," admitted the brown-haired girl, her eyes burning. "And I didn't go because I wanted to boast of it at dinner parties. I went because I thought Eleanor had lied about you, Allan—because I suspected her of having stirred up this trouble between us—"

The bomb exploded, just as Olive had planned.

"What do you mean?" blazed Eleanor, surprise and defiance mingling in her tone. Tensely she faced her accuser. Loosened strands of hair fell about her shoulders. Her shirtwaist was torn, her hat crushed. Yet she was beautiful. Even in anger and disarray she was beautiful.

Olive, who had followed intuition in accusing the peacock, wondered if she might be wrong; wondered if, after all, Hugh was the smooth disseminator of lies, and not the little blonde at all. . . . However, she had set the forces of readjustment in motion. She must stand by them, guide them. . . .

Light came down from a corner arc lamp, illuminating the drama in the street.

"You know quite well what I mean." Olive's voice quivered in spite of the efforts she put forth to control it. "You know you played on my fear and hate of drunkenness

when you lied to me, months and months ago, about Allan indulging in a barroom brawl with a chauffeur. You know you expected trouble to develop from that untruth. You—you know—"

For the first time in her flirtatious career, Eleanor felt the sting of defeat. At that moment, her hope of Allan—her infatuation for him—went out of her life. Mentally she turned to other fields of conquest, rehearsing the list of her suitors. But, being an infrequent loser, she was also a poor one, and so could not restrain the sneer that curled her lips nor the sarcasm that tinged her speech.

"Perhaps you'll explain how a prize fight could put these remarkable facts in your hands. I believe, dear Olive, that your faculty of invention is more highly developed than your faculty of truthfulness."

Olive, impulsive by nature, found difficulty in holding back the tears that welled beneath her dark brown lashes. The peacock's bravado

alone stimulated her to an attempt at self-control.

"Certainly," she spoke with forced calmness, in a low voice. "Certainly I'll explain. . . . . Spike Callahan was the chauffeur who blackened Allan's eye. He told me the story—all of it. And neither Allan nor Hugh had approached a saloon that night!"

There was an impressive stillness. The crisis in the drama had come and gone . . . and Eleanor's character had been found wanting.

Olive turned toward Allan Scott, who had observed these singular proceedings with frank astonishment.

"I believed Eleanor when she said you were intoxicated that night," came the belated confession. "And—my fear and disappointment was so great, Allan, that I didn't treat you fairly—I should have listened to your story. It was all my fault—our separation. I accept the blame. And I'm—I'm sorry—you don't know how sorry—"

She turned away. Allan, whose eyes had been opened, went over to her and took her hand in his.

"Let's go back, Olive," he said, "to the old days—to the old relationship."

Eleanor shrugged her shoulders, and smiled, wryly. "How sweet," she mocked.

Then Hugh came with the taxi; and they separated.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE QUALITY OF FAME

The morning papers gave generous space to the Hazlitt-Callahan fight, and all were agreed that Spike out-punched and out-sparred his opponent. But the ring battle was not alone in its glory. Diligent sporting writers, quick to grasp at every rudiment of news, caused many a stick o' type to be cast in telling the story of the baby riot.

It was a most mysterious affair, they averred. A tipsy man had quarreled, it seemed, with another man, whereupon three hundred spectators indulged in a slugging match. Although a "wagon-full" of arrests had been made, no one was able to give a coherent, sequential account of how the riot started and whither it progressed. The Captain of Police, backed up by the Director of Public Safety,

confidently advanced the theory that a notorious tenderloin gang—with its animosities and personal hatreds—was at the bottom of the whole affair. But there was "no evidence to this end," and so the problem at length died a natural death.

The barrier between Allan and Olive had been removed for all time. They had learned their lesson. But Eleanor Gage had not learned hers. Furious at the defeat of her plans, she cut the couple from among her acquaintances.

Concerning these things, Hugh Barclay remained, as usual, in the dark. Like many dreamers, he walked through strife without being aware that strife existed. . . . It was the role he had been assigned at the creation of the primal atom.

As time passed, the Westerner grew more and more immersed in his magazine and the reception it was enjoying at the hands of the American public. Hysen Hyman, the dis-

tinguished critic, had lately announced his opinion of Thought, and newsstand sales were booming. The September issue sold upwards of forty-five thousand copies—an unprecedented achievement, an heretofore unheard of accomplishment for a journal of its size and character. The periodical distributing companies cried "bravo!" in Hugh's ear. They confidently told him he had found a gold mine and advised him to work it for all it was worth. "You have, it seems," wrote the president of one such concern, "sensed a widespread demand for a type of literature which was in time past considered of little or no interest to the general public. If properly handled, there is a fortune in your discovery." He then advised an increase in the price per copy.

But Hugh dismissed the last-mentioned idea. What he wanted was a wide circulation of his views, not money: he had plenty of that. Shipments of silver bars, arriving in rapid succession from his Rocky Mountain mine, added

principal to his bank account at the rate of a trifle over two thousand dollars a month. As Allan Scott phrased it, this was "ample to scrape along on until the dawn of better and more prosperous times." So Hugh retained the old price on Thought, and invested his profits by giving orders for an edition of seventy-five thousand copies.

About this time, the Arizonian subscribed to a press clipping service. There is no surer way of ascertaining one's status in the public eye—at least, that is what the clipping house told him—and as the Arizonian was eager to lend an ear to the comment of the press, the clipping folks experienced little difficulty in "landing" him as a client.

The newspaper clippings were illuminating; there was never any doubt about that. Some were mysteriously speculative; others indulged in wild guesses; but all were very interesting from first paragraph to last. It was soul-soothing to sit down after a day of hard

work on the magazine and read those pr clippings.

A versatile column-filler on the staff of New York daily wrote:

> We have before us at this moment a new magazine called Thought. It is edited by one Hugh Barclay. Although we know nothing of Mr. Barclay, except that which his writing reveals, we feel reasonably safe in styling him a man of promise.
>
> This editor's chief aim, as he states in one of his editorials, is to popularize thinking—particularly philosophical thinking—among average people His secondary aim is to exploit a system of thought which he terms "philosophy of destiny."
>
> The philosophy of destiny lool upon all life as a carefully woven pl with one incident, one life, one era, c

epoch evolving logically from another —all according to natural law, all foreordained.

The varied articles in Mr. Barclay's little publication tend toward the strengthening of this theory, although each is separate and distinct in itself. For instance, in one of his essays, he asserts that thought is a charge of Universal Mind gathered in and given off from the battery of the brain; and therefore that the quality or depth of thought an individual may enjoy depends entirely upon the excellence of the brain mechanism, which excellence, in turn, can often be definitely traced to incidents of the near or distant past.

It has occurred to us that if certain New Yorkers might drop into convenient service stations and have their brains recharged, the community would profit much thereby. . . .

And so on and so on: the scholarly, though intermittently caustic, dissertation spread itself over a generous half-column of space. Here and there were praises for the founder of Thought, but they were tempered and subdued to match that particular newspaper's policy.

All the clippings were not so smooth and impartial as this, however. Praise was at times displaced by cold drizzles of sarcasm. One writer, an eccentric humorist of the Middle West, said:

> * * * regarding a future life, I was always a bit skeptical; but it seems this was due merely to ignorance. A fellow by the name of Barclay tells me so, and of course he knows. This Barclay chap gets out a magazine labeled Thought. In it, he figuratively laughs me and my tribe to scorn. 'Why

should you worry?' he asks. 'Your molecules go marching on. . . ."

In spite of the cynical tone, it was this sort of material that added zest to the chase through pile after pile of clippings.

Newspapers were not lone commentators. Weekly magazines, both of general and topical nature, added their voices to the melange. And later, monthly journals of the higher class approached the subject of Barclay's propagandism with their typically slow, dignified, measured tread—an approach thoroughly in keeping with the desires of such publications to conserve what is best in the literature and thought of the day.

The editors of The Spectator, The Atlantis Magazine, and Contemporary Prose addressed letters to Hugh—letters in which they offered splendid remuneration for articles similar to those appearing in Thought. Hugh politely declined. He meant to confine all his

efforts to Thought. He would identify himself, heart and soul, with the one publication. He would concentrate rather than disseminate his labors. Bullets were better than buckshot.

And so he pressed on. And so his name and fame spread. And at length came the time, as diminutive Doctor Puggleby had inferred, when men of science looked upon Barclay as a contemporary. Hysen Hyman, writing in The Spectator on "Current Philosophical Literature," reiterated his belief in Hugh's philosophy of destiny. The result was a controversy among scientists everywhere, which, of course, resulted in added publicity for Hugh. A war of mind and pen developed and waxed hot. Great thinkers entered the arena. Much was said both for and against the philosophy of destiny.

Doctor Puggleby took up the fight. He stood staunchly by his pupil. Making use of a long-idle pen, he prepared and published in the highest of high-brow journals: The At-

lantis Magazine, a series of defensive articles. Here he upheld Hugh's philosophy and also his action of writing for the people—of seeking to raise the level of common thought—and praised the writing ability that made such action possible. Further than this, he utilized one of Huxley's favorite figures of speech by painting Hugh Barclay as scout of Science—a dashing cavalryman riding far in advance of the main body, skirmishing through the dim regions of philosophy, and blazing the way for exact scientists who, later, might measure and weigh and prove the truth of his contentions.

Hugh kept free of the controversy. He would have liked to enter in—his fighting blood was up—but, fortunately, his ability to repress desires came to the rescue and prevented him from wasting a prohibitive number of hours on the composing of "scrappy" articles. Thought required most of his time, and would get it, he decided. But he was,

nevertheless, vastly interested in the polemics.

Success is natural. It comes sooner or later to the intelligent worker, and varies only in degree. The moment of its appearance is regulated to the fraction of a second by the amount of conscious or unconscious preparation for it. Barclay's less intimate acquaintances, and others, looked upon his success as an unaccountably sudden thing; but it wasn't. Without being aware of a definite aim, Hugh's thoughts and musings for ten years past had been paving the way to achievement. When the stage was set and everything in readiness, a pretty girl—a golden-haired, frivolous, changeable girl—appeared and proceeded to crystalize this embryonic great man's desires with a little phrase about marrying a philosopher. Since then, the girl had forgotten her little phrase; and, being much occupied with love intrigues, with dances and dinners and beauty preparations, failed to learn of her Western friend's rise to prominence. The

Westerner himself, though he called on her frequently, had not yet arrived at the point of telling. So of course to this frilly miss, Hugh Barclay remained Hugh Barclay, and not a scout of Science whose fame was spreading across the continent. . . . She knew he was interested in philosophy. Often he spoke of his beliefs — and inexpressibly bored her. Half the time she did not hear him, and the other half failed to understand, but automatically she applauded, because she knew that men liked applause. Regarding the Arizonian's achievements, however, she knew nothing.

Considering these circumstances, it is not strange that Eleanor Gage remained in ignorance of Hugh's first book, which was published December 10th of that year. The volume consisted of a dozen or more selected essays from Thought. It was issued in record time by a famous New York publisher.

Observe, now, the peculiar trend of events.

The holidays were near at hand. "Four more days to Christmas," sang the newspapers. The Avenue overflowed with package-laden men and women. Wreaths of immortelles were everywhere in evidence. The smell of pine trees swept with the wind from corner to corner. It was very inspiring.

Gift talk was the only talk. To give and what to give was the all-abiding topic of conversation: it seemed that folks had never known another. Nor was it idle talk, nor boast. Allan Scott's swelling bank account bore mute witness to this.

Hugh Barclay was moved by the holiday atmosphere to purchase an expensive gift for Eleanor: a pair of jeweled opera glasses cased in French Morocco. It went by special messenger, that evening, with Barclay's card and best wishes included.

Eleanor was performing the double feat of dressing for the theatre and nibbling from a box of bon bons when Hugh's messenger

arrived and presented the gift packet to the butler. The butler sent it immediately, by one of the maids, to the peacock's boudoir.

Wonderingly, expectantly, the blonde beauty slipped the little red rubber bands off the parcel, opened the Morocco box as it lay in her hand surrounded by smooth, creamy paper, and peered within.

An ejaculation of surprise came from her. "What a pretty gift!" she cried, rising on her toe tips and ciking her heels ecstatically. Then she ran to her mother, who, in negligee, reclined on a chaise longue in the adjoining room, reading a novel.

"Look, mother!" bubbled the peacock. "See what Hugh Barclay has sent. Isn't it beautiful?" And before her handsome-though-stout parent could voice a word of approval or disapproval, she hurried on: "I must run out tomorrow and purchase a little something or other for Mr. Barclay. It daren't be much. He'd think I was favoring him. But I cannot

accept such a delightful Christmas offering without making some return. And, do you know, I had almost forgotten him!"

It rained next day, and hailed and snowed. The weather was very miserable. So Eleanor stayed within doors. But she did not forget her intention of buying a little something or other for her good friend Hugh. Like a new toy, the jeweled opera glasses were ever before her eyes. Occasionally it reminded her of the donor.

Along about mid-day she unhooked her telephone receiver and called the number of the city's largest department store.

"Connect me with the book department, please," was her added request. And later: "Would you mind calling Miss Abbott to the phone?"

Eleanor was remotely acquainted with a certain Miss Abbott who, according to Miss A.'s own words, "slaved from morning 'till night among books I care nothing for, and among

authors whose names I can never remember." It was this very Miss A. whose voice at length came over the wire. Greetings over, Eleanor got down to business.

"I want a book for a friend—a good book," explained the little blonde, briefly. "He's interested in philosophy. Have you anything along that line?"

"Oh, lots of stuff," retorted Miss Abbott.

"Good! Then I'll leave it to you—I haven't time to get down. Select something nice and send it to Mr. Barclay, care of Allan Scott, 1649, The Avenue."

"What was that address, again?"

"Sixteen-forty-nine."

"Oh, yes. Sixteen-forty-nine. And the name is Carway, eh?" And the peacock, who wasn't listening with any great degree of interest, failed to observe the mispronunciation, and acquiesced. "And I am supposed to slip in a little, holly-bordered Christmas card—with greetings and good wishes and all that

sort of thing, from you—is that the idea?"

"Yes, if you will be so kind."

"I'll be glad to help you out. I suppose it's annoying to have to scare up presents for a small army of folks every time the holidays roll around. Am I right?"

"You're right," rippled Eleanor. "Good-bye, and—thank you."

And so it came to pass that Hugh Barclay was presented with a copy of his own book—the collected essays—as a Christmas gift from the girl he hoped to marry!

Such is the quality of fame.

# CHAPTER XXI

## THE MYSTERY OF THE GOBLET

Christmas day in Arizona found Hugh's old Indian helper limping through the pines toward a rocky eminence which lay some two or three hundred yards north of the Barclay bungalow.

This faithful servant, this shrewd mine worker, Jim Montana, was attired as befits the peaceful, industrious Hopi. He wore loose white cotton trousers gathered in below the knees with tasseled cords of red. His shirt, equally loose and equally comfortable, ignored the conventions by falling outside rather than inside the trousers. A pair of faded moccasins on his feet and a scarlet band around his hair completed the rig, except for a Navajo blanket that depended from sagging shoulders and trailed its nether tip upon the ground.

During the two years of Hugh's presence in the bungalow, Jim Montana led, by choice, a more or less uncomfortable life in white men's garments. The stiff, heavy-soled shoes especially annoyed him. They were a bother and a nuisance. He cast them off, together with the tight-fitting corduroy trousers, the suspenders, and other incidentals, within the hour of Barclay's departing; and the gloomy lonesomeness that encompassed him upon being so suddenly deprived of comradeship was eased somewhat by the change of vestments.

But these were past events, and therefore of secondary importance in the mind of this copper-skinned descendant of the Pueblo dwellers. The present activity was what counted. And he thought of nothing else as he threaded his way through the pines.

Shortly, Jim found himself upon the rocky promontory that was his destination. Here he seated himself, cross-legged, and sucked the crisp air with unnaturally jerky inhalations.

His eyes, cast downward, searched the boundless desert, a thousand feet below, for signs of life. But nothing moved. Even had something stirred, his aged eyes would have been unaware of it.

Jim Montana was wondering, in an empty-hearted way, if spring would find Hugh returning once more to his home on the mountain-side. The Hopi entertained a deep affection for this young man who, after repeated failures, had come into fame. He wanted Hugh back. He wanted the editor of Thought to live in the bungalow that Barclay hands had builded years ago. . . .

And so he sat and mused in his primitive, gaven-image way. At his back the Arizona Rockies reared skyward. Up, up they went: a natural tower of Babel. And all around were trees in grotesque poses: petrified giants extending their lean, tentacle-like arms in supplication to the Gods above.

Montana's thoughts came back of a sudden

to his purpose on the promontory. He arose and from beneath his blanket produced a sack of sacred meal. With an effort, he straightened his shoulders. A religious light burned in his eyes. His lips moved, slowly at first, but faster and faster as he warmed to the task in hand.

High up on the jutting ledge, suspended, as it were, between earth and sky, the Hopi went through his devotions to the Sun Father. He scattered handfulls of sacred meal to the four points of the compass, to zenith and to nadir. But the native program was slightly altered, or rather extended, to include a "civilized" idea. Jim wanted good crops in his little truck patch, it is true. And he wanted to be delivered from the wrath of the Gods. Yet this was not all. He desired the granting of other wishes also. So he prayed aloud and asked a few personal favors, just as the white man does.

One of these favors concerned itself with Hugh.

Jim's religious exercises were always and without exception practiced in secret. Barclay himself knew nothing of them; and, although Hugh would have encountered little opposition in securing the privilege of an audience, had his wishes led in that direction, there was forever that invisible barrier of white men's teaching versus the red man's belief—a barrier that precluded the possibility of their getting together on common ground. However, if truth were told, Jim frequently felt a desire to teach the Hopi creed to Hugh. The desire had come for a moment to the surface when, on the eve of Barclay's departure, Montana asserted that all things, even goblets, possessed life.

Once, Hugh and Jim had attended the Snake Dance at Walpi together. And the scion of the Barclays had evinced no end of curiosity in the manoeuvers of the Hopi priests;

but nothing developed. As time passed Hugh fell again into an easy, drifting, pleasant life of dreams, and the glimmer of interest in tribal theology appeared to fade away entirely.

Having concluded his invocative ceremony on the ledge overlooking the desert, Jim Montana cast his blanket to the ground, all unmindful of the chill atmosphere, and limped toward a pile of loose rocks that lay nearby. The look in his eyes, and the lines of determination on his browned and wrinkled face, implied the existence of a difficult task.

He stooped and drew a long rope ladder from its hiding place under the rocks. The free ends of this ladder he tied around a tree trunk, and tested its strength by pulling upon it. The remaining thirty feet were tossed over the cliff into space. The parallel lengths of rope writhed for a moment like twin snakes, then sagged into the perpendicular. Jim folded his blanket and placed it under the robes

on the cliff edge: a precaution against frayed threads and horrible death.

Then, carefully pawing the air with each mocassined foot as he went, the Hopi crawled down his ladder and swung to and fro in the wind. Now and again he paused and looked below, but quickly averted his gaze. It was a sheer drop of a thousand feet to that point where the sage brush and sand met the up-going Rockies.

Little wonder that old Jim had sought the aid of the Gods before undertaking such a perilous feat! Little wonder that he had begged for renewed strength in the muscles that were fast going back on him!

High above, like a vast shadow in the air, the mountain glowered at him. Many a peak up there flirted with the passing clouds. But Jim had neither the time nor the inclination to admire scenery. To take one's eyes off the ladder meant unconquerable dizziness, and dizziness meant a loosening of the hold, a

whirling rush through the air, and—the end. Montana looked only at his hands, and minded his business closely.

Suddenly in the face of solid rock before him appeared a break. The break widened, lengthened, and became an arched doorway. The light of the morning sun fell upon it, revealing a cave.

Jim stepped from his flexible ladder to the floor of the cave, and did it with a sureness of foot that spoke of past experience.

Here he paused to recoup from his exertions. The sunlight slanted in upon him, throwing his white trousers and red tasseled cords into bold relief, and splashing a bright circle on the floor; but from the waist up he was quite invisible by reason of the absolute blackness that pervaded the rest of the cave.

Through the opening in the rock the desert was visible: flat, boundless, and without color contrast. It spread away to the East as far as the eye could reach.

The sky was a beautiful, unvarying blue. Here and there drifted a cloud—a mere patch of white cotton. Not a hundred yards from the cave an eagle beat its way through the rarefied atmosphere. Over all things hung the solitude of the waste places.

Anyone save an Indian would have died in this environment; but Indian theology, teaching, as it does, to see life in inanimate objects, gives added significance to the rocks, the trees, the very pottery of native manufacture. It personifies them. To a good Hopi, the rocks, the trees, and the pottery live. Although he sees not the ever-moving atoms of matter that constitute these inanimates, still he realizes the existence of their movement. He cannot explain. He cannot tell why the atoms move. His science is negligible; but the beliefs of his ancestors pulse through him and he cannot doubt.

Jim Montana turned away from the cave-mouth, and rumaged in a nearby corner. His

hand found a battered soap-box. He dipped around in this until he had resurrected a candle and box of safety matches.

With the winking candle in his outstretched hand, he picked his way through the cave and into the heart of the mountain.

Having traversed a distance of perhaps twenty feet, the Hopi came to a stop and held the candle above his head. The nervous flame shed weak enough radiance, yet it was sufficient to perceive the necessary details. Jim's pause was opportune. Not an arm's length away, the rocky floor ended abruptly and slid away into the darkness of Erebus.

But Jim was far from baffled. His small, angular features exhibited neither surprise nor disappointment. Sticking the candle in its own melted wax on the very brink of this fear-inspiring void, he crept over the ledge and dropped, landing on a three-foot lower level than that which he had quitted.

Montana recovered his candle, walked three

or four steps, and stuck it again on the floor. The flame flared up, revealing heaps of moldy, peculiarly shaped objects scattered promiscuously about. The Indian bent over one of these. He selected four pieces at random, and returned to the mouth of the cave.

Once more his limbs demanded rest. The old fellow was breathing heavily. He squatted in the circle of sunlight, the spoils of his adventure lying in his lap.

Some moments passed before he exhibited even passing interest in the dust-covered objects. At length he picked one up and traced a line with his index finger in its thick coating of dust and dirt and mold. A white streak immediately sprang into being. Jim was silent. Not a single wondering grunt came from him. He expected the white line!

He held the object to the light, that he might better study its shape. And he did not dance nor shout with joy when it became apparent that this grimy article was a symmet-

rically wrought goblet of solid silver—a replica of the one Hugh Barclay cherished as a family heirloom. He was beyond such demonstrations. The novelty of riches had worn itself out for him.

But the silver goblet did have its effect. It brought back the past. And as Jim Montana sat there in stolid retrospection, fondling the ancient chalice and occasionally flecking the dust from its surfaces, a series of mental hieroglyphics unfolded within him, and he found himself living over the days of long ago. . . .

It began back in the ice age, or thereabouts; at least, so tradition ran. The big ice sheet advancing steadily, irresistibly from out the unknown North, sent all living things scurrying before it. Birds and beasts and tribes of prehistoric men fled toward the Southland, chattering their fear of this revolution in nature the while they put as much space as possible between it and themselves.

The Hopi Indians were, even in these far

distant times, a race of semi-civilized people. They lived, loved, worshipped, and pursued their labors in a rich Northland—a land that lay in the very path of the oncoming glacier. Here they mined silver and wrought it into beautiful goblets and bowls and ornamental knicknacks.

Jim Montana had heard that white men doubted the existence of civilized life during the glaciel period. What fools these white men were! But he knew better. He had proof. He, alone among the peoples of the earth, could laugh at theorizing professors and fauna-hunting geologists. His mind drifted back into the prehistoric details as though he, himself, had lived them.

There arose before him the picture of antediluvian Hopi chiefs gathered in council. Fear was upon every countenance. A great wave of chill winds had swept the country in the midst of summer. Temperatures had dropped from ninety degrees to the freezing

mark. No one could account for it. Even the priests were at a loss. So a conference of the tribal leaders was called. . . .

Some were of the opinion that the Sun Father had been outraged by a diminution in reverence on the part of Hopi worshippers and had accordingly withheld half the heat from his rays, whereupon it was urged that a splendid sacrifice of nine human lives be made to the God of the Heavenly Fires. The priests nodded their heads sagely over this suggestion. All they asked was three days preparation.

Meanwhile, the temperature dropped lower and still lower. The chill winds became icy blasts, and where gentle mid-summer rains should have fallen, blizzards raged.

Without more ado, nine copper-colored youths were selected for the sacrifice. They marched, naked, through the largest pueblo village, with every man, woman, and child in the land trailing behind. The priests had con-

structed nine pyres of stone, and around these were heaped dry, inflammable pine boughs. Straight to their funeral pyres the doughty Hopis marched. The populace crowded 'round. The priests chanted prayers. A great wailing arose.

But the splendid sacrifice was never to be consummated. At that moment, a Hopi hunter who had come down from the mountains in a hurry, flung himself into the crowd and beseeched everybody to fly for their lives. A wall of ice that reached to the heavens was bearing down upon them, he asserted. They would be crushed, annihilated, if they remained.

Turmoil ensued. Half-nude forms of men and women flashed in all directions. The varied pueblos were infested one moment with scared Indians gathering up their possessions, and deserted the very next, as their owners set out with all due haste to gain the mountain ranges.

The fleeing Hopis had burdened themselves with as many stone-tipped spears and pieces of bear-skin as they could reasonably be expected to carry. They were going into an unknown land for an indeterminate length of time and wanted to be prepared.

On the other hand, the chiefs and priests and other officials gave no thought to spears and bear-skins. They bore far more valuable freight. Theirs were burdens of solid silver.

From vantage points along the mountainside, the Hopi hunter's words were verified. Fifteen miles to the north, at the curving entrance to the valley in which the red men lived, appeared a white wall of ice and snow. It was crunching and grinding and tearing its way across the landscape. Massive trees fell before it. Rolling hills and dales that strove to offer resistance found their soils ground to powder. On, on came the frozen tidal wave, destroying all that lay in its path with the relentlessness of an avenging angel.

This long white arm of disaster was merely a tributary of the main ice sheet. Loosened by the thawing weather, propelled by the tremendous weight behind it, and given further impetus by the southward slope of the land upon which it found itself, the avalanche rolled rapidly away from its parent body. It had traveled possibly two hundred miles when it entered the Hopi valley.

The flight of the red men continued days without end. Over the rocky steeps of the mountains they picked their way, dragging their possessions along, sleeping where night happened to overtake them, and pushing on again with the first blush of dawn. The hardship of it began to tell upon them. Lack of food and shelter shortly affected the weaker brothers, many of whom dropped in their tracks. Yet the tribes could not turn back. Their pueblos and their lands had suffered annihilation. A new country must be found, a new community built up.

Again it was the story of the survival of the fittest. Instinctively the Indians knew it, and fought for preservation, while death reaped a harvest.

The cargo of silver caused great suffering. Its bearers staggered along under loads that weighed more than they themselves. No one had the temerity to suggest that it be thrown away. The chiefs would have scoffed at such a suggestion and heaped maledictions on the heads of the offender until that very rash person had withered beneath the assault and properly wished he had never been born. Accordingly, the silver was transported through the wildest of wild countries by brawn and muscle and human will alone.

Now the air grew warmer. A cloudless sky greeted the wandering Hopi band. And one fine morning when they arose to proceed with their march, they perceived an immense desert thousands of feet below them. To eyes wearied with gorges and declivities and im-

penetrable mountain passes, the flat plain took on a wonderfully attractive appearance. The Hopis prepared to descend.

But the end of their trouble was not yet. They had marched possibly half-way down the mountain-side when a horde of strange and terrifying savages burst upon them from cover of the trees. Instantly, battle raged.

The unknown tribe was vicious. Never had the Hopis met such an animal-like aggregation. Clothed in nothing whatever, armed with rocks and unshaped clubs, and predisposed toward biting their opponents, the aggressors gave evidence of a very low status in the social order.

At the first sign of fighting, officials in charge of the silver treasure retreated half a mile or more up the mountain. Here one of their number lay down on a high, flat rock to reconnoitre. His gaze followed the wall of a precipice that fell away from him in a straight line to the desert below. Presently he ob-

served a hole in the wall, and called his companions' attention ot it. The discovery of a cave resulted.

How the Hopis lowered their cargo of silver pieces into that almost inaccessible cavern is shrouded in mystery. Jim Montana, cogitating the matter countless centuries later, wondered if they might have formed a human chain—a dangling line of bodies—along which the now ancient relics were passed. Or if, perhaps, the bearskins, lashed end to end, had served the purpose of a rope. . . .

Having hidden their valuables from unfriendly eyes, and fully expecting to return some day and regain possession, the Hopi officials rushed to the aid of their tribe, plunging boldly into the affray and fighting as they never fought before.

The end came quickly. The Hopis were no match for their ferocious enemy. Outnumbered, and unused to the bestial manner of fighting, the men from the North-land col-

lapsed just as their pueblos had collapsed beneath the heel of the glacier.

The carnage was frightful. Blood ran in rivulets over the rocky battleground. And the strange savages displayed a mad glory in it all.

By and by it was seen that massacre awaited the Hopi tribes if they remained. As with one accord, every man broke and ran. Down the mountain they swept, rolled, tumbled, and crawled, the naked horde at their back, the open plain in front.

The Hopis were good runners. This alone saved them. They filed out upon the desert in long, wavy streaks, and again headed south, leaving fully a third of their number lying, slain, near the grave of the treasure.

Thereafter, the red men from the north were afraid of that district. They made excellent time getting away. Many a day of trudging through sand passed before they found a camping spot that satisfied them—that is, a

land sufficiently removed from the home of the barbarians to insure peace. But, eventually, they did find it; and when they came upon the mesas overlooking the Painted Desert, they said: "Here we shall remain!" And they did. And there they are today.

Jim Montana had got this story from his father, who, in turn, had received it from his father, and so on, ad infinitum. The tale, as told in the Hopi tongue, was highly colored. Jim's sagacity led him to discount half of it. Yet he never lost faith in the ancient epic. From childood he believed it to contain fundamentals of truth. And he determined to find that treasure.

The fact that expeditions projected by chiefs who had survived the massacre, and by many another thereafter, were said to have failed ment only one thing to Jim Montana: the silver pieces of the ancient Hopis were still intact, and in the cave wherein they had been placed. As white men would have phrased it,

it was up to him to rout the goblets and bowls and ornamental knicknacks out of their mausoleum and do with them as he willed.

Jim knew in advance that his countrymen would have none of his chatter about hunting treasure. To them the silver pieces were not a reality. And even had every Hopi in the land known the treasure to exist, they would have refused Jim the privilege of leading an expedition. Jim never could command. Hopi law said no. A certain something prevented.

Montana brooded the problem for several years, then quit his home and set out to find help elsewhere. White men were more credulous, more hopeful, he reasoned. Perhaps they. . . .

Down in Gila he met the elder Barclay. Barclay took a great liking to the Indian. They became staunch friends. Jim confided in him.

Hugh's father, who was a dreamer of the rarest sort, believed, with Jim, in this greatest

of all dreams. They pledged themselves to undying secrecy, and under pretence of a prospecting tour, set out for the mountains.

Then began probably the longest and dreariest search in the world's history. Chasing a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow was sport compared with this. Three years and a half were consumed in the quest, and even the white man's extraordinary gameness had commenced to waver when, quite unexpectedly, the cave divulged itself.

Hilarious with his success, Barclay married, built his bungalow, and proceeded to live as a prospector who had struck it rich. Former pals wondered why he "didn't go East," as his contemporaries were in the habit of doing, and said as much. He told them that he loved the great expanses of desert and of mountain even better than his own Virginia. They took his word for it.

Jim Montana and the elder Barclay carefully preserved the secret of their wealth. And

in order to sidetrack suspicious persons, they sunk a shaft in the rocky ground. This was a blind, a decoy. It was backed up and strengthened by the shipment, some months later, of a smelting and refining outfit from San Francisco.

Things were swimming along splendidly. Then Hugh came; and later, death in the Barclay household. . . .

Jim Montana, old and bent and crippled with rheumatism, awoke from his reverie to find himself in the cave of the ancient Hopis, with the four pieces of silver still in his lap. Through the arched opening, and between the rungs of the dangling rope ladder, he could see the desert glaring up at him. He wondered, vaguely, when Hugh would cross it again on his way home.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE LAND OF THE WONDERFUL IF

Time dripped its days through the hour glass, and spring came again. Hugh's popularity with the reading public continued undiminished. Thought was being circulated at the rate of one hundred fifty thousand copies a month. The book of collected essays—usually a dead issue in the publishing field—sold astonishingly well. Reviews praised the author and prophesied a great future for him. The name Barclay was on everyone's lips. Even Eleanor Gage had learned of her friend's achievements. And Hugh felt, for once in his life, that he had lived up to the reputation of the Virginia Barclays.

However, only a portion of the Westerner's ambition had been realized. There yet remained what, in his eyes, seemed most impor-

tant, and most to be desired of all conquests —the winning of a woman whose presence stimulated not only a big, unselfish love for her, but a big, unselfish love for the whole world, as well. He wanted Eleanor. He wanted her more than he had even wanted any person or thing before.

How a girl like Eleanor could affect a man like Hugh in this manner, how she could, without effort on her part, stir the very depths of his soul, remains a riddle of the profoundest sort. But she did. That is the unforgettable fact. Love, it seems, defies analysis.

To the Arizonian it appeared that he was making little progress in his affair with Miss Gage. His gentle advances met with no response. She was pleasant, vivacious, and altogether charming in her treatment of him, but no more than that. She stopped right there. Barclay tried to draw her out. His method would have been funny had it not proved so disheartening. He talked, impersonally, on

the varied aspects of marriage, urging the wedding ceremony as a great factor in social progress. He plunged into fluent discourse on the cave-man's marital relations and habits—a few of which, he claimed, the modern man has managed to eliminate from his daily life much to the satisfaction of everybody everywhere: wooing with a club, for example, and similar practices. But his pet declaration—and one he invariably used as a clincher—was that, after all, "a successful union depends entirely upon the individuals who are a party to it." And then, just as he was about to ask if she didn't think so, too, he found the subject promptly—changed.

"Look! Isn't that a pretty gown?" she would inquire of him at the end of his sociological splurge. And he would bite his lips, and agree that it was an extraordinarily handsome gown, a gown of rare beauty, and one such as few women found opportunity to wear. Then the peacock would say: "I am

going to get a gown like that," and smile. And he, and she, would know, instinctively, that the inquiry into the present state of married life was temporarily at an end.

So it went. Hugh was never encouraged to feel himself on sufficiently intimate terms with the girl to ask her hand in marriage. This puzzled him. Eleanor Gage had seemed very different when they first met. For instance, that night in the ball room—many, many months ago—she made no attempt to disguise the fact that she was flirting with him. She intimated, in the depths of her wonderful blue eyes, that he, above and before all men, entranced her. She cuddled to him. She fairly thrust her fragrance and her beauty upon him. And—well, he could not hold these things against her. In the simplicity of his nature, he thought, then as now, that she entertained a deep liking for him. Which shows Hugh to be the poor judge of character that he was. To philosophic problems he applied a vision

that was nothing short of microscopic; but where the intimate dispositions of his friends were concerned, he laid aside the microscope and became purblind. He was too willing to believe in everybody. All his education and all his traveling had availed him nothing in this respect. It was a phase of his character which had frequently led him astray. . . .

Barclay had lost his splendid tan and acquired in its place the usual complexion of the city dweller. This was not due to love—nor lack of it—but rather to the indoor life he was now leading. For, when Thought was still in its infancy, Hugh had rented an office in a downtown skyscraper. He had refused to submit Allan's mother to a constant trapesing of visitors into her apartments above the store. Mrs. Scott looked upon the Arizonian as a great man. She would have done anything in her power to assist him. He tried to deserve her friendship by being considerate of her. So he procured an office, and fitted it

up with a desk, half a dozen chairs and a book case.

Cooped high up in his steam-heated nest in the sky, the editor of Thought spent eight solid hours each day reading, writing, contemplating and otherwise preparing future issues of his journal for the press and the public. Nature's own coloring faded from his cheeks and was superseded by a sallow sort of brownness that advertised the desk-chained life he was leading.

Hugh did not lead the desk life because he preferred it. If anything, it was a duty—and a burdensome duty, at that. The very blood in his veins cried for the open air, for the sunlight and the hills; but he crushed down each threatened uprising of the forces within him. He had promised himself to remain in the city —despite the soggy atmosphere, the dust and dirt and oppression—until that day when he should receive low and bashful affirmation—a shy nod of the head, perhaps, or even a blush

that spoke consent—to a certain request of his. . . .

But the call of the pen was insistent. Hugh smothered it by burying himself in work. It came again, and again. The Westerner was weakening.

However, his endurance of city scenes and city manners might have continued until May or even June, but for the fact that Nature came along and tossed an early spring into the scales of life, whereupon Hugh broke his self-tied fetters by deciding, with repressed savageness, that he would go out into the nearby country as much as possible from now on. He would roam through the woods and the deep grass, and revel in the stir of apparently unconscious life that was going on about him. The magazine would get half his time, no more. It that wasn't satisfactory, it could go to the deuce. All outdoors was calling, and would not and could not be resisted. So he no longed struggled against desire, but

closed and locked his office door and went out.

To facilitate his getting into the country and back, Barclay bought an automobile—a huge gray thing with black wire wheels and an exhaust that could be heard seventeen blocks away. It was a powerful car, and a speedy one. Hugh liked it immensely. So did his friends; and his friends made as frequent use of it as he himself.

Yet there were times when the Westerner preferred being alone at the wheel, with no thought of conversation to bother him, and his radiator pointed toward the upstate country. On such occasions he would run fifty or sixty miles into the heart of the hills, park his car by the road-side, lock it, and disappear for a couple of hours.

To disappear meant various things. Occasionally it meant long, aimless hikes across the face of the landscape; or perhaps the climbing of a hill that offered a better view of the country roundabout. More often it

meant plunging into a large acreage of woods. Under cover of the trees he would start to run, sprinting at first, but gradually slowing down to a lope, threading his way through long aisles of spruce and oak with animal-like agility, balked at neither the lost paths nor tangled underbrush, and always penetrating farther into the depths of the forest. He was at home here. The open air, which he loved, was his again. He relished it as a tippler relishes wine.

When the buoyancy of freedom had spent itself, peace would possess his soul, and he would turn cityward reconciled to the temporary confinement of an office building.

These solitary trips continued for some time. At first they filled a definite need, and filled it well, but as time passed they grew steadily (and quite inexplainably) unsatisfactory. There was something lacking. That was evident. But what could this something be? Hugh roamed the upstate country, breathing the untainted air with great, thankful gulps,

delighting in the power of his stride, and enjoying to the utmost all that his eyes beheld. He was in perfect health and spirits; yet somehow there grew upon him a feeling of incompleteness, a sort of—well, there was little use trying to explain it—even for self easement. He was not "in tune" exactly, that was all.

Then came a day at last when the unexplainable was explained.

At exactly ten o'clock on the morning of the twenty-fourth of June, Hugh Barclay repaired to the neighborhood garage wherein his car was stored.

"Fill the tank," he said to Henry, the gas-man, flipping him a coin. "I'm off for the country."

The kinky-headed, black-as-coal gas-man deftly caught Hugh's offering, slipped it into his overall's pockets, sacrificed his seat by the door with a readiness that proclaimed his liking for the liberal gentleman, and clattered

at Barclay's heels into the smelly garage, conversing affably as he went.

"Hot day, boss. Ninety d'grees 'n sun. Kind o' day t' keep yo wind-shield wide open. But yo should bibble 'bout d' heat. Das so, boss? Hyah! Hyah! Heat cain't ketch yo, can it?"

It was a hot day. It promised to become insufferable by mid-afternoon. A car—and the open road—was the only means to comfort, exactly as Henry had intimated. Barclay pitied the drones who were slaving away their time in office cages. He could see them clearly, driving their pens by sheer force of will. He could see them pause, at times, and dash the perspiration from their sallow faces. Theirs was a petty work, and a mean existence, with little to broaden it; yet even the most radical thinker could not and would not designate them as unnecessary. They were very necessary, else they would not have had

their places in the scheme of things assigned to them.

Hugh drove his car out of the garage and down a side-street to the Avenue. He paused at the Scott Galleries and informed Allan of his departure; then was off again, but not with any show of the speed which he knew his car to possess. Rather, he dawdled at the wheel, making less than ten miles an hour, and baking unconcernedly in the sun's rays as he mused along lines of thought which Henry's weather comment had given rise to.

Shortly he began to feel sorry not only for the office drones, but for everybody who had to remain in the city and bake. He felt that he would like to proclaim a holiday and take the whole metropolitan population for a ride in the coutnry. While immersed in this speculation, it came to him, suddenly, that the little girl whom he cared more for than the population of a dozen boroughs, and who, he hoped, would some day be closer to him than

any other person in the world, was probably stifling in the city's heat at that very moment.

To the rescue!

Barclay's foot fairly pushed the accelerator pedal out of sight, and the machine leaped ahead like a cat with a dog at its heels, causing the precipitous and undignified flight of numerous pedestrians. Uncouth language rose upon the air. The vehicle-dodgers tried to tell the departing Hugh what they thought of him, but Hugh ddin't wait to exchange courtesies. He felt that he had better keep right on going. Eleanor was waiting for him —even though she were not aware of it—and the sooner he arrived at her home the better.

The peacock arose from a late breakfast to answer Barclay's summons. Her mass of golden hair, save for a few stray ends, was hidden beneath a boudoir cap of crepe de chine and delicate lace. Her face was rosily beautiful, as always.

"I have come," said Hugh, "to take you into the country."

Eleanor was willing. She merely asked that Barclay wait until she got into her motoring togs. It would take but a moment. So the Westerner sat down, while Eleanor disappeared up the broad staircase.

Hugh heard her ring for her maid, and presently footsteps sounded from the room directly above. No doubt the maid was tripping back and forth from wardrobe to dressing table. Came a lengthy silence, and Hugh pictured the blonde beauty before her mirror, having limp and tumbled masses of hair arranged in manner most becoming. . . .

A quarter of an hour later, Eleanor came into the room where Barclay was seated. She wore a bright yellow sport coat of thin stuff, and looked the picture of young loveliness. The sparkle in Hugh's eyes instantly betrayed his admiration.

The peacock extended her arms, raised her-

self on her toes, and pivoted in the manner of the professional model. This was a little trick of hers.

"Will I do?" she cooed, and out of the depths of her limpid blue eyes rose a wonderful mirage of the Great God Beauty to weave a spell about the man who looked, and hide from his view all faults, all shortcomings, everything—save comeliness.

"Will you do!" echoed Hugh, striving for something else to say but not finding it. "Will you do? I—I—"

"Yes?" softly. She was coaxing the compliment from its lair.

The Westerner found his voice. "Friend Eleanor," he said, "you are the most beautiful girl-lady I have ever—"

"Let us go," urged the little blonde. She had had her fill, and was quite satisfied.

So they left the big house, and he helped her into the car. And they set off for the up-

state country at a clip that turned motionless atmosphere into rioting gusts of wind.

She sat beside him—shouting occasional bits of conversation through tiny, cupped hands. And he listened to her voice, and felt the thrill of her presence, and over him stole a feeling of contentment. . . .

The reason for his being "out of tune" was thus explained. He needed Eleanor to round off his happiness. By her side he was contented. Without her, a sense of incompleteness and dissatisfaction possessed him. That was the answer. There never had been any other answer.

As Barclay drove over the smooth highway, with the sunlight full upon him and the breeze in his teeth, he called to mind the details of a walk he had taken early one Sunday morning long past. Eleanor Gage was little more than a stranger to him at that time, yet somehow she seemed as close then as now. It was snowing that day, he remembered, and folks

with turned-up collars were hurrying by him. Some carried newspapers. Others were burdened with loaves of bread and slices of apple cake purchased in little, corner bake shops. Hugh observed them carefully, and observed also a milk bottle, a carefully wrapped loaf of bread, and a stack of Sunday papers on the top step of a private house. These things had suggested a home of one's own. . . .

Then and there—standing in the midst of a whirl of snowflakes, yet quite unconscious of the weather—the Arizonian had made a very important decision. He would marry Eleanor Gage! Just when he would marry her, he did not know. He must first prove his value as a thinker and a doer, as a social force among social forces. She had professed to worship at the shrine of learning. A girl like this could never satisfy herself with an idle dreamer. The man of her choice must, of necessity, have accomplished things. So Hugh Barclay proceeded to climb out of the idle dreamer class

and make a name for himself—and for her. One year and half of another slipped by. His dream of a home and the "only girl" remained always before him, urging him on and pushing and driving him to the most difficult of tasks. The stimulus had not been without results. He was now a recognized figure throughout the country.

And the day for carrying out his decision was come at last!

Simultaneously, he thought of the silver goblet, and of his mother's identity, and of Eleanor's position in society. And a pang shot through him. But he crushed the thoughts back, smothered them, forgot them . . . and turned to the scenery to preserve that forgetfulness.

The upstate hills were clothed in green. Trees had taken on luxuriant ballet dresses with row on row of leafy ruffles. Wildflowers bobbed at the roadside. The hum of the insect world rose from every bush and patch

of grass. And the sun shone down on it all in bright splendor. The day was made for love, and the scene for a country courtship.

Presently the mouse-colored car came in sight of a long, steep hill. It was probably the longest and steepest hill in that section of the country. All of one side of it was covered with timber, while the other side—the side on the left of the road—rolled rather abruptly into a valley.

Hugh's powerful machine gained the summit with ease. Barclay then steered out of the line of possible traffic, stopped the engine, and, following a practice adopted on earlier trips, locked the car.

"Let's get out—and stretch," he suggested.

They strolled to where the road dropped downward, and stood there, side by side, admiring the scenery.

It was said of this hill that five counties were visible from its topmost point. No doubt this was true, for a great and wonderful pan-

orama spread out below them. And, in strong contrast with an Arizona landscape, splashes and streaks and daubs of color predominated. Quaint farm houses; herds of grazing cattle; rail fences; truck patches; wide stretches of daisy dotted fields—all this, and more, met Hugh's eye, and charmed him with its rustic beauty. Far off, a river, gleaming and sparkling in the noonday sun, cut its way through a rich green pasture land. Weeping willows overhung the banks, affording tent-like shade. This was all very pretty (thought Hugh), but it lacked the grandeur of Arizona. Out in that western state the open places had no end and the mountains met the sky. True, the up-state hills were soothing. They lulled one into pleasant torpor with their swelling undulations, with their gentle buzz and drone and color. Arizona, on the other hand, invited contemplation and soul expansion. The one was beautiful, pleasing. The other—majestic.

Hugh looked questioningly at Eleanor.

"It is pretty—in a way," the little blonde admitted, referring to the scenery. Barclay wondered what she meant by that added phrase "in a way," but, as she made no move to explain, the Arizonian said nothing. Had he known that Eleanor rather scorned the beauty of inanimate objects, and held the fleeting beauty of face and form to be superior, he would, no doubt, have caught the meaning of her qualifying words. Here was an insight to character he missed entirely.

Some time passed in silence, then Hugh said:

"Shall we walk a bit?"

"It is hot in the sun," complainingly.

"Through the woods," Hugh enlarged on his idea.

"Come ahead," said the peacock.

Daintily she lifted her skirts, and Barclay helped her through the dusty roadside grass. They faded into the forest.

It was comparatively comfortable here. A

gentle breeze soughed through the trees, tempering the summer heat and mingling its pleasant sound with the twitter of birds and the buzz of insects. Cooling shadows peopled the air. Motes of sunlight played at intervals along the path they traveled.

By and by they came to the edge of a stream. Here lay a large, flat rock, roughly oval in shape and extending a foot or more from the ground. Hugh brought forth a handkerchief and spread it on the rock.

"Sit down," he said to Eleanor. "Nature made this stopping place for you and me. The old rock has been waiting our coming these ten thousand long years, perhaps. Are you tired?"

"No; but I am always willing to rest." She seated herself.

Barclay sat beside her. They watched the gurgling, stone-choked stream on its way down hill.

Out of the corner of his eye, he could see

her profile. It inspired him. He faced her.

"Have you ever wanted a home of your own?" he asked with such directness that she could not well avoid a reply.

The peacock looked calmly at him.

"No. I can't say that I have."

This answer was totally unexpected. Previously, Hugh had entertained the thought that all women, poor or wealthy, wanted homes of their own. His face registered disappointment.

"But—but—," he strove to recover lost ground.

"That is," amended the little blonde, "I have never thought enough about it to know whether I wanted a home of my own or whether I did not."

"Oh!" said Hugh. He leaned forward, resting his elbows on his knees and his chin in the palms of his hands. A little distance away the stream trickled along its pebbly course. Woodland noises rose all about him, but he

failed to hear. A saying had occurred to him —something about beautiful women lacking brains. And he was wondering—But no! It could not be. He was wrong. What a miserable puppy he was—and how unworthy. . . .

He essayed a fresh start.

"Well, I have—often," he confided.

"Have you?" There was no encouragement in her voice, but Hugh refused to be sidetracked. The big question burned within him. He pressed on.

"Yes. And I have day-dreamed about it until all the details of such a place took shape in my mind, and became very, very clear—and enticing. The building itself is somewhere in Arizona. It is a large, squat mansion. But buildings alone do not make homes. This, after all, was the smallest detail of my dreams. The vision I found more often before me was that of my wife—"

"Was she a good looking vision?" smiled Eleanor.

"Very," declared Barclay, with unwavering seriousness. "Never in my life have I beheld a lovelier face. Her cheeks are soft and wonderfully colored. Her eyes are as blue as the Arizona sky. And—and would you believe it?—she has a veritable cape of golden hair. Like yours, El—"

He turned toward his companion. The girl's eyelids were lowered. A blush suffused her face. She tapped nervously on the rock with the toe of her little white pump.

Barclay slipped his arm around her waist.

"Oh, can't you see, dear? I have been wanting you this long while," he murmured. "Surely you've felt—you've known—"

He wanted to tell of his struggle for fame, of the long hours he had spent over his books and his writing. He wanted to confess that he had done it only that he might be worthy of her. But he could not bring himself to talk of these things. It seemed so egotistical, and unnecessary, for surely she remembered their

conversation on the night of the dance. . . .

Eleanor hastily arose.

"Let us go," she said. "Someone may run off with the car."

Hugh fell into step beside her. They left the gurgling stream and flat rock behind and struck out for the road. Both of them were well aware the car was locked, and snugly safe from harm, but Eleanor had seized upon the first excuse that offered, and Hugh was too full of other thoughts to quibble over trifles.

However, the Westerner was far from silenced. The great subject gripped him, brought a wonderful light into his eyes. He began again:

"Can't you picture us out there in the West —married—and—and happy? Can't you see the peace and contentment and worthwhileness of it all? Little girl, little girl, I want you more than I can ever put into words! If you will only say that you will come with me and be my wife; if—"

"Please, Hugh—stop! I can't marry you. Not now, at least. There's a reason—"

"A reason!"

"Yes; well—no. That is, I—"

She was flustered. The rosy blush deepened into crimson. She had spoken indiscreetly and realized it too late. Something—anything—must be said to satisfy him, to quiet his interrogations, to stave him off. Whereupon, Eleanor lost her head, and acted rashly.

She stopped, and put her hands on his coat lapels.

"I—I was joking," she quavered, and Barclay concluded that modesty had prompted her expostulations. "P-perhaps, after all—"

Triumph came into the man's eyes.

"Then we are—engaged?" he cried.

"If you—wish," she gave in.

It was over, then—successfully over and done with, after eighteen months of effort. Joy possessed the Westerner. He drew his lit-

tle lady close to him and smothered further utterance with kisses.

A moment later they emerged from the woods and climbed into the mouse-colored car. Hugh was as light as a feather. The world was his. Boundless happiness, too. Heaven itself could offer little more.

In strange contrast with the Arizonian's honest exultation, there lurked in his sweetheart's eyes a "devil may care" expression. Hugh failed to note it. He unlocked the motor.

They did not start for the city immediately. She cuddled to him and offered her lips to be kissed. Resting there in his arms, their eyes met—and she smiled.

"Remember, dear, our engagement must remain secret—for awhile, at least," she urged, softly. And Barclay agreed.

The scales of life trembled, as though a breeze had disturbed their balance. A tiny

man-atom had gained much that day. But a tiny woman-atom had lost what little spirituality she possessed.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE MASTER MUMMER

The bungalow was in disorder. Tin pans, plates, and culinary utensils of varied genera littered the enclosed shed that served as kitchen. In the living room, a bookcase—pride of the long-dead Barclay's heart—hid its polished surfaces beneath a coat of dust. An atmosphere of loneliness and depression hung about the place.

From Jim Montana's bed-chamber issued, at intervals, half repressed moans. The Hopi was flat on his back. Robbed of his normal strength, he found himself barely able to move. And, what was even worse than this, the rheumatic pains were at him again, gnawing their way through his flesh.

Came a hail through the forest glade: "Bungalow ahoy!"

The Indian's body grew tense. He listened. It came again: "Bungalow ahoy!"

A stranger's voice! Disappointment shone in Jim's dark eyes. He had hoped it might be Hugh returning home from the great city that lay in the East. And that reminded him: he must send a message to Hugh. He must tell the now famous editor of Thought about his miserable sickness. That would bring young Barclay in a hurry, he concluded. Yes, he would do that.

A knock sounded on the door.

"Come," said Jim.

A short, stout, twinkling-eyed, red-headed man entered the living room. Finding no one, he looked about him in cheerful bewilderment.

"Where's everybody?" he called out. His was a hearty voice and a pleasant one.

"Here," gasped the Hopi, writhing in sudden pain. Speech hurt. With each deep inhalation, a thousand daggers plunged through the muscles of his back and chest.

"Oh, so there you are," commented the stranger. He pushed through the half-open door to Jim's room, but stopped short at the sight of the prostrate redskin. "Say, what'm I doin'? Buttin' in on a sick man?"

Montana managed to say that he was glad someone had come. He was in need of a doctor, he explained. If the red-headed gentleman happened to pass through any of the little foothill towns within the next twenty-four hours and would be so kind as to direct a physician to the bungalow, he, Jim, would be eternally in debt for the favor.

The stranger was sympathetic.

"Sure, I'll do that," he responded. "I'll get the Doc an' I'll come back with him meself. In much pain, hey?"

"M-mm," nodded Jim.

"Too bad. I'd like to be able to do something for you right now, but I ain't much of a hand at doctorin'. Me name's Dan Pote: sea-farin' man be trade, placer miner be

choice. I'm a-hoofin' it to Gila. Thought maybe I might get somethin' to eat here—"

Whereupon Montana directed Mr. Pote to the enclosed shed and invited him to partake of anything or everything that appealed to his taste. Pote accepted the invitation with alacrity, whistling cheerfully as he prowled around the littered kitchen.

Possibly an hour later, the short, stout man took his leave. His last words were a promise to return with medical aid.

Once more alone with his pains and his contemplations, fear lay hold of Jim and commenced its slow torture. Quiet pervaded the bungalow. Not a voice, not a footfall, not even the friendly bark of a dog came to carry with it the thought of life and movement. The great silence—a silence compounded of desert and mountain fastness—shrouded all things. Only his thumping heart and the creak of the bed as he turned and tossed, brought sounds

to the Hopi's ear. And Dan Pote's recent visit served but to emphasize the stillness.

Thump, thump, thump! His heart threatened to burst its containing walls. Was the end at hand? Why wasn't the doctor there? Why wasn't Hugh there? Why didn't something other than his heart make a noise? The silence that once he loved had become a menace.

He fought the fear of death. The pains would go away, perhaps after a day or two, he assured himself. They must run their course. From this there was no appeal. But surely they were not fatal. They were like a bully, making great commotion yet lacking the final punch. He would show them the strength of a Hopi's defiance.

He needed two more weeks—possibly three —of life. Hugh must be summoned, the ancient tribal treasure disposed of, and—and—

The old fellow struggled to the edge of his

bed. He felt about with moccasined feet until they touched the floor, then by degrees raised himself to a sitting posture. There he remained, fully ten long minutes, to pant and perspire and wince.

After several ineffectual attempts, he gained his feet and went staggering across the floor, through the half-open door into the living room where, many months ago, Hugh Barclay had sat and pondered the problem of the goblet. One arm was extended, seeking support, the other pressed close to his side. He held his breath, hoping thus to minimize the pain; but this effort was quite useless. The phantom knives flashed at him and tore his flesh to shreds, and the anguish of it brought choking cries to his lips, and tears rolled down his cheeks.

In the corner where the bookcase stood, he dropped to his knees and pawed spasmodically at the floor. At length he found a loose board, then another. He lifted them and revealed a

fair-sized cavity wherein lay a wooden box covered by a piece of burlap.

The box was dragged forth and the burlap covering thrown off. The contents were withdrawn and scattered in a half-circle on the floor . . . half a dozen sheets of writing paper, a bottle of ink, a pen. Two bulky manilla envelopes, stuffed to overflowing with documents. Several loose newspaper clippings dealing with the historic Mrs. Bloomer and her trousered life. Then a garment: a sort of cape of flimsy, colored material, followed by two squares of buckskin, and a small wad of red yarn. Last of all came a dark blue Manta: a one-piece dress belted at the waist, which is the national costume of the Hopi women.

Jim held the Manta in his hand for a moment, caressing it gently, and a sound very much like a long drawn sigh escaped him. For a brief moment or two all sense of physical pain was banished and a wistful light came

into his eyes and he was held in the thrall of pleasant reminiscence. Then the thought of his impending end crashed down upon him. The pain returned with renewed energy. And the wistful light was suddenly replaced by one of intense religious fervor.

The aches within him were growing more unbearable, yet he seemed, now, not to care. Other things commanded his attention. He gazed down upon himself, and loathing for his white cotton trousers and loose shirt shone from his deep black eyes.

"Oh, God!" he cried, in his own Hopi tongue. "I cannot die in this raiment: a living lie to myself and people! I—"

With quick, deft movements, he began throwing off his clothes, and then it came to light that Jim Montana was not an Indian man but an Indian woman!

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE PASSING OF JIM MONTANA

Fifteen minutes later, the woman who for years had been known as Jim Montana had dressed herself in the blue Manta, swathed her legs in buckskin, and hung the flimsy cape over her shoulders. She had clubbed her hair at the back, after the fashion of the Hopi squaws, and tied it with red yarn. Shipapu held no terrors for her now. She was prepared to die.

There was a wan smile on her face as she gathered the bulky envelopes, the paper, pen, and ink bottle in her arms and placed them on a scarred library table that occupied the center of the room. Let the pain bite. Let it rant and tear. Certain things must be done. She would not be deterred from doing them.

The aged Indian woman dropped into a chair

beside the library table and, one by one, placed the envelopes and writing paraphernalia in front of her.

First and most important was a letter to Barclay. She dipped the pen in ink, thought for a moment, then proceeded with the task of writing, which was a more or less difficult undertaking. "Dear Hugh," she scrawled, and followed with possibly half a page of choppy English. Having progressed thus far, she laid the missive aside, intending to return to it shortly, for her attention had wandered to the manilla envelopes and the documents they contained.

One of these ruled pieces of foolscap was the senior Barclay's will. In it, he had disposed of "the mine" (he being very careful never to mention "treasure" in writing), and of the bungalow, and of other of his possessions as well. Hugh had never perused this document, and it was well that things had so transpired, for certain discrepancies would

have been instantly apparent to him, among them the fact that he, Hugh, was not sole beneficiary. Hugh's mother was to receive half the inheritance. But Mrs. Barclay—that vague lady from San Francisco—was supposed to have died several years before her husband. How then could this will—which, if the date might be taken as authentic, was of last-minute composition—how could this will bequeath money and property to a dead woman.

To the editor of Thought, this would have presented an unsolvable mystery, but to the woman called Montana all things were clear. For she was Cherry: wife of Barclay, and mother of Hugh!

The rheumatic twinges were growing less severe. Jim Montana stretched her arms full length on the library table, and gazed idly across the room and out of the window. The giant desert, a thousand feet below, lay sleeping and dreaming in the white hot sun. She

wondered in just how many days Hugh might be expected to cross that desert on his way home. . . .

Then she, too, fell to dreaming. Her imagination brought to mind pictures of the past: pictures rich with color and so real that the characters lived again. She saw herself on the three-year pilgrimage in search of treasure; and it came to her, casually, that the treasure had been the one and only cause of her peculiarly distorted life. She was a Hopi maiden then, and dressed as a Hopi maiden, in blue woolen Manta and flimsy cape. She made a pretty picture, and knew it, and was glad, for the man she loved was by her side night and day; and, had she not been pretty, he—a Virginia Barclay—would not have remained by her side so long, and would not have eventually married her. . . .

The birth of Hugh, junior, filled a glorious niche in her career. It was followed by a series of sad happenings. Her big, robust,

generous husband was stricken with a malady that came of over-exposure. He lingered for weeks. During that time he had frequent talks with her. Some times his tongue slipped.

Once he said: "If I die, Cherry"—he always called her Cherry, and she loved the name—"if I die, I want you to take this youngster of ours and—and—well, educate him. Make a great and good man of him. And, if possible, keep it from him that he is an Indian—"

No sooner had this last admonition escaped him than he noticed the quick hurt in Cherry's eyes, and tried to amend his wish: "No, no, I don't mean that," he soothed. "Do the other things, but don't hide his parentage. A Hopi Indian is as good as any white man that ever lived."

However, it was plain to his wife that the matter had not been satisfactorily settled, and still troubled him; for later, with the coming of delirium, the elder Barclay voiced the fear

of having Hugh grow up an Indian. He babbled a lot about the "first families of Virginia," and about the distinguished history of the Barclays. That settled it. There was now no other course. As Cherry kneeled by the bed stroking her husband's hair and praying to the Sun Father that he might live, she resolved to carry out each mumbled wish.

Two days passed. Barclay died.

Forthwith, Cherry was entered upon a life of martyrdom. To save her son from the social restrictions that are visited upon men born to other races than the white, she denied motherhood, denied relationship, denied all that was sweet and dear to her.

This was not easy. It was quite as hard for the Hopi girl as it would have been for her white sisters. Yet the sacrifice was made, for her husband's sake and for the boy's.

She killed her identity and smothered her individuality. She became a man. She lived

in imitation of men. She took unto herself the name Jim Montana.

She had heard before of women dressing as men. Mostly they did it for fun, and sometimes for criminal purposes, but never as a means to sacrifice.

When the first change of vestments came, Cherry had shuddered away from the white cotton trousers and shirt, but the clippings about Mrs. Bloomer and similar occasional stories in stray newspapers concerning women who preferred that garb, strengthened her and held her firm. In time she was reconciled to the transformation.

The sad game was drawing to a close. The carefully woven plot of her life, ordained since the creation of the primal atom, had reached its inevitable climax.

She thought again of Hugh.

The boy had outlived her. Surely it were better to tell him the great secret now than have him discover portions of it after her

death, and so remain always in doubt. And then, there was the treasure. . . .

She laboriously thought the thing out. But the more she thought the more she became opposed to the course she had chosen. Was the sacrifice to be in vain? Were Hugh's hopes and dreams and well earned success to be trodden under foot because of a last-minute confession? No, no. It must not be. She would tell him the story of the treasure, that he might know its hiding place and how to secure it, but as for further disclosures—

It was settled. The secret of her motherhood must remain a secret. The Hopi woman's mind wrestled with the problem of how to accomplish this. But her thoughts refused mobilization. Haze gathered before her eyes. Dimly she knew she must destroy that letter to her son; then she must get back into those odious clothes. And then—then she—

Cherry, alias Jim Montana, reached out to take the letter in her hands; but destiny

clouded her vision. The room, the table, the ink bottle faded. A drowsiness was creeping over her. Mechanically her fingers closed on the pen. The drowsiness increased. Her head nodded forward and came to rest on the table edge, and a pleasant, dreamless slumber possessed her.

It was Jim Montana's last sleep. Her deception was over. Her life-long masquerade ended.

The sun had set, and deep purple shadows filled the glade near the Barclay bungalow, when Dan Pote and the doctor arrived. They threw open the door and strode into the living room.

"We're here," cried the placer miner, cheerily. And then, his eyes growing gradually used to the gloom, he turned and beheld Jim's silent figure.

They found an oil lamp and lit it. Pote's companion — a one-time medical man — kneeled by the Hopi's side. He listened for

a heart beat, failed in his quest, and listened twice again. He arose.

"Dead?" queried Dan Pote, in an awed whisper.

"Quite dead," was the M. D.'s verdict. "But listen here, Pote, I understood you to say the patient was an old Injun man."

"So 'tis—ain't it?" wondered the stout fellow, who, in his excitement, had failed to observe the newly-donned Manta.

"Not on your life. It's a squaw!"

"Well, I'll be switched!"

They stared at each other, then at the silent figure.

"Let's go," said Dan, suddenly.

"Wait! Here's a letter—and a bundle of papers. Perhaps the woman has relatives—"

The physician held Cherry's unfinished missive close to the flickering oil lamp. Pote hung over his companion's arm, and together they perused each labored sentence.

They remained in this position, staring at the

letter, for several minutes after having learned its contents. Then Dan Pote exploded.

"My Gawd!" he cried. "She's the mother of a man what thinks he's all white! And the poor devil never knowed he was a half-breed!"

# CHAPTER XXV

## GOLDEN HAIR AND SHALLOW HEAD

Hugh was bursting with the news of his betrothal, but Eleanor's word was law to him, and so strictly did he abide it that whenever love or marriage was mentioned in his presence—no matter how casually—he either changed the topic or faded into the background.

However, all good machines are possessed of safety valves, and the human machine is no exception. Hugh's safety valve was his glowing countenance, his sprightly walk, and his unflagging attentiveness to Eleanor. Without these natural escapes from pent up emotion, the Westerner's dissilience would have been imminent.

"Unless all signs fail," said Scotty to him-

self, "Hugh has captured 'the only girl in the world'—and I can guess who she is."

Allan's penetration may have been due to the fact that his own heart and mind were in a similar condition, with this exception: his engagement to Olive Henderson had been made public these two weeks past, and the date of their wedding decided upon, whereas poor Hugh floundered around in enforced secrecy.

But Allan lost faith in his penetration when, calling one evening at the Henderson residence, he was met by a very excited young lady who demanded of him, before he could open his mouth: "Have you heard?"

"Heard what, Olive?" wondered the antiquarian.

"Eleanor's married!"

"No!"

"Yes."

"Did they elope?"

"They did—to a little town in Maryland."

"But I saw Hugh only this afternoon."

Olive looked at him in a way that made his spinal cord quiver, just as it would have quivered at the theatre during a critical moment of the drama's development.

"She didn't marry Hugh Barclay, you goose," said Olive, quietly. "She married the rich and rakish Mr. Fiske—John James Fiske!"

Scott stared, bewildered, at his fiancee. "—married that gilded sport? Fiske—the chap who backed Spike Callahan?"

Olive nodded vigorously.

Allan made a hopeless motion with his hands and slumped back into his chair. His first thought was of Hugh.

"Well—" he began.

"Well—what?"

"Eleanor plucked a lemon, I say."

"Perhaps she deserves it."

"You're right, Olive. She does," declared Scott, vehemently. He was thinking of the

trouble the peacock had made for him. "But how did you learn of this? Surely Eleanor didn't confide in you?"

"Hardly. I haven't seen Eleanor Gage since that topsy turvy night of the fight."

"Then who—?"

"Spike Callahan told me the whole story. I spent this morning in town—shopping; and I made some very good 'buys' and was rather pleased with myself. Perhaps if I hadn't been so pleased, I wouldn't have allowed Mr. Callahan to address me when we met. You remember his features, don't you, dear—massive jaw, tiny eyes, and just enough of the brute about him to frighten a girl? Of course you do. But I wasn't afraid. I thought of you; and remembered too, that Mr. Barclay had thrashed him once. He was leaning against a cigar store window, smoking a cigarette, when I passed by. He caught sight of me, and recognized me, and came over and walked beside me for half a block or more. (Don't be

angry, dear. I am glad, now, that I allowed it. I have thought the matter over and over, and it has occurred to me that Hugh Barclay is very much in love with Eleanor. Perhaps, knowing what we do, we may save Hugh from undue suffering). . . . Well, Spike Callahan chattered away. He reserved nothing; but I could see he believed that I knew as much about the affair as he did. In his estimation, I am Eleanor's closest friend. I didn't disillusion him. I let him ramble. It seems that Eleanor had been half-engaged to the Fiske fellow ever since the Hazlitt-Callahan fight, although she associated with many other men during that time. Then, quite unexpectedly, she was taken with a mad desire to marry the young millionaire. She told him plainly that if he didn't claim her immediately, she might at any moment fall in love with another man—her usual irresponsibleness, you see. However, she insisted on absolute secrecy, knowing, of course, that her parents

would do all in their power to prevent the ceremony, for John James Fiske is the storm center of gossip among the four hundred, and there's hardly a matron who isn't harried with the fear that her daughter may marry him. Callahan drove the couple, in John James's twelve-cylinder roadster, to a little out of the way town where the parson had been instructed to await their coming. It was over and done with in a few hours. That was yesterday afternoon. And now they're back in the city and no one is the wiser."

"I am afraid this is going to hurt Hugh even more than we imagine," muttered Allan.

"Oh, I wish we could do something to help him! He's such a splendid fellow," sympathized the brown-haired girl. "Can't you suggest something, Allan?"

"Only that we try to keep the news from him. But that merely delays the ordeal. He must face it, sooner or later."

They were silent a moment. Then Scott

said: "You and I must be growing sentimental, Olive. Why should we wail when our good friend Barclay loses a girl like Eleanor Gage? She isn't deserving of him. If he married her, he would be getting as much of a lemon as she plucked in this fellow Fiske. Upon reflection, it seems to me we should rejoice that Hugh is at last disentangled from the siren."

"No doubt you're right; but that makes Hugh's loss none the more bearable. Love defies logic, and Cupid was born blind, you know, Allan."

"By George, my little girl is growing cynical," Allan smiled ruefully. "At that, I think you hit the nail on the head. The handsomest man I ever knew married a thin little woman with a glass eye. It appears he failed to observe her face. Saw only her soul, you know. It's just the reverse with Hugh, and with most everyone where Eleanor is concerned, I imagine. A fellow takes one look at her face, and

it's so ravishing and all that, that he forgets to look further. And when at last he comes to consider her neglected soul—why, he's at a loss. He hasn't seen any soul—hasn't the least idea what it looks like. So he begins to picture one in his mind, using her features for a pattern. What's the answer? Simply—"

"And you, dear, are waxing philosophical," interrupted his wife-to-be.

This was in the nature of a compliment, for Allan Scott was more often accused of being careless, amiable, easy-going—anything but deeply thoughtful. Olive's words so pleased him that he tried to continue in the same strain:

"Several months ago, Hugh and I were discussing the West of yesterday and today, and we hit upon the topic of mirages. Hugh described several he had seen in Arizona—one in particular—the beauty of which transcended that of the Painted Desert itself. He saw the little town of Red Dog reflected on

the sky-line, and, although the town itself is not an object of art, its coloring was warm and full of contrast, and the sun glinted on the scene in a way that gave it an almost celestial appearnace. But Red Dog isn't a celestial town at all. It's just a dump. It's a rickety old burg with a few dozen rickety old inhabitants, mostly Moqui Indians. Yet look what the mirage did for it. It gave the old place charm. You see, a mirage is deceiving. You can't depend on it. Being a thing that doesn't exist, it leads you astray. Eleanor is like that. The beauty of her gives you the impression that she is possessed of a personality equally beautiful. It's all wrong. Sweep away her looks, and what have you got? Mighty little. Just a rickety old soul—"

Scott spoke feelingly, for he knew his subject. He had had experience.

"That isn't philosophy; that is poetry," murmured Olive, as Allan arose to go.

She brought his Panama and placed it at

just the right angle upon his head; whereupon he took her in his arms and kissed her good-night, and together they walked to the door.

Allan strolled home. He had no use for cars. He wanted time to think, for he was in a stew of apprehension about Hugh. If the Arizonian should learn of Eleanor Gage's secret marriage to the rakish Fiske, what would he do, how would he act? Would he go back to his home in the West? Would he take to travel, as he had done in the past? Would he throw up his career and all that went with it to become again an idler? Or would something even more serious transpire? Years ago, Allan had acquired an idea that to injure a Westerner was to invite instant annihilation. The idea stayed with him through his youth and into his manhood. he passage of time dulled it a good deal, but the nucleus remained. And now, as he walked along the arc-lighted Avenue toward home, his memory grasped that nucleus and his imagination en-

larged on it. The result was a sharply defined mental picture of Hugh going gunning for a certain wealthy sporting man by the name of Fiske.

Allan Scott was startled. This far-fetched possibility he had conjured up before him must never be allowed to materialize. The editor of Thought was a man of temperament. In spite of his bear-like gentleness (even lovableness), he was an intense sort of person, and liable to moments of passion, as he had demonstrated, months ago, in his tussle with Spike Callahan. Might not some critical happening result from placing such a man in the trying situation which fate had already prepared for him?

Allan argued it out with himself, and suffered considerably in the process, but he always arrived at the same conclusion: that the longer the secret remained a secret, the better for all concerned. How long the period of censorship might endure, he hadn't the least

idea. Perhaps for a few days, perhaps for a few weeks, perhaps longer. Thoughtlessly, he hoped it might be the last.

It was apparent to Scott that he must conceive a plan to preserve the secret. But here his native cleverness deserted him. He was barren of ideas on a subject that touched so closely the welfare of his good old friend and chum. He admitted tearfully to himself that he was balked.

Depressed, half sick with forebodings, he brought out his key and admitted himself to the darkened Galleries.

Upstairs a light burned in Barclay's room. Hugh himself sat hunched forward on a chair. His eyes stared, unseeing, at the silver goblet on the bureau.

Allan, catching sight of him, felt an electric thrill of alarm course up his spine. He thrust wide the half-open door, and entered.

"What's wrong, old fellow?" The antiquarian tried to talk cheerily, but there was a great

sinking at the pit of his stomach. Had the secret leaked out?

Hugh glanced around. The far-away look faded.

"Jim's dead," he explained, listlessly. "I'm going back tomorrow." He drew a crumpled telegram from between fingers that had crushed it into a ball, and handed it to Allan.

Hugh Barclay: (Read the message),
Old Hopi Indian known as Jim Montana died here today. Important revelations. Will await your return before disposing of body.

Dr. Willoughby.
Dan Pote.

And then the plan came to Allan.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### A PLEA AND WHAT CAME OF IT

White faced, nervous, yet striving to control their nervousness, they faced each other. Many months had passed since their last meeting, in consequence of which Eleanor did not attempt to delude herself into the belief that his was a friendly call. Still, there was no great anger in his eyes. If anything, he looked as though he had come to ask a favor.

"Well?" Her tone was subdued.

Allan straightened his shoulders. "I—I am here on a delicate errand," he announced.

The peacock avoided Scott's level gaze. She began picking at an imaginary raveling on her sleeve.

"I learned today," continued the antiquarian, "that you had married John James Fiske."

Eleanor walked to a chair and sat down. She was trembling visibly. The warm color had fled her cheeks.

A minute passed.

"And you're—you're going to publish it everywhere, I suppose." There were tears in her eyes—angry tears. But there was also fear.

"Then you really intended to keep this news from your friends and family?"

A defiant nod was the answer he received.

"Well, I'm here to help you."

The little blonde was on her feet in an instant. "Help me?" she quivered. "Help me? What do you mean?"

"Simply that I want to co-operate with you to keep the secret. Your marriage—"

"Hush! Please lower your voice. Someone may hear."

Allan remembered the cold sternness of her father, and the cause of her trepidation was clear to him.

"What I started out to say," he began in a more subdued tone, "was that we've got to keep the thing from Barclay's ears—"

Eleanor's face whitened another degree.

"Hugh cares a great deal for you, I think," persisted Scott. "His actions for a long while back have been those of a man in love. He's been lively, even exuberant. But his exuberance was checked last night when a telegram came announcing the death of Jim Montana. I suppose you, Miss Gage, can hardly understand how a Barclay could entertain affection for an old Indian. I'll tell you how. It's the same kind of affection a wealthy Southern girl would have for her colored mammy. . . . Jim watched over him from the cradle up. And now the old man's gone; and Hugh is berating himself for not being home when it happened. On top of this comes your marriage—"

"S-sh!"

"You haven't told 'Clay? You haven't men-

tioned—anything?" Allan demanded.

"No."

"Good."

Again they stood quite motionless, eyeing each other. Although he disliked her thoroughly, he could not help but admire her beauty . . . her hair was like sea foam touched by the sun's rays. Yes, she was good to look upon. Little wonder that men fell madly in love with her. But the grace of her figure, the regularity of her features, and the coloring that made of her a master portrait, had no enlivening effect upon Allan. He saw, behind it all, the unstability of her character; and he realized that her worth lay only in her beauty. He was sorry for her. He could see the phantom face of the man she had married leering at him from over her shoulder. Then it came to him, with somewhat of a shock, that even her beauty would shortly be a thing of the past.

"After all, Hugh's lucky to escape her

. . . but there's no use telling that to a man in love," mused Allan, who knew, himself, what it was to be in love.

He re-opened his conversational batteries upon Eleanor: "I am here, Mrs. Fiske, with a single purpose in mind—to save Hugh Barclay from undue suffering. One shock at a time is sufficient, I assure you. Furthermore, you've got to give a man plenty of time to get over one agitation before you administer another, or that man's nerve ganglia and brain cells will start raising the deuce, with disastrous results not only to the man's health but to the health of certain folks who may perhaps have caused the difficulty. Understand?"

"You mean—"

"I mean just this: that Hugh is temperamental and that I certainly would not care to be in Mr. Fiske's shoes—nor in yours—if someone happened to tell him, now, of your nuptial adventure."

"You're wrong," said the blonde. "Hugh

may be temperamental, but he is not the kind you would have me believe. He wouldn't lay his finger on me, nor on my husband. He's as gentle as a lamb. Really, my dear Allan, you can't frighten me with that kind of talk."

"I don't want to frighten you. I merely want to urge upon you the necessity of keeping the news from Hugh, temporarily at least. 'Clay leaves on the Overland Limited late this afternoon. He'll come for you, no doubt, and take you to the station with him in his car. Can't you see that telling him of your marriage, or even acting strangely toward him, would be cruel—at this time?"

"Well—yes."

"He will remain in Arizona several months. We can write him—and explain—"

Allan was watching her eyes, for into them had come an oddly tender light. He guessed that she was harking back to pleasing hours in Hugh's company, or perhaps recalling quaint and lovable details of the big fellow's

character. Such details were myriad. They evidenced themselves in the Westerner's features, in his voice, and in his writings; and everyone who knew or read him felt the spell — the strange, inexplicable spell — of this dreamer who had emerged from self-imposed obscurity to attract the world's attention with his philosophies.

Allan was partly right. The peacock was thinking of Hugh, but in a far more personal way than her caller imagined. She brought to mind and dallied pleasurably with a certain moment—not long past—when she had placed herself in the Arizonian's arms and given herself up to his eager kisses. The memory of his affection stirred her. But it was too late now for regrets. She herself had erected the barrier between this writer whose thoughts were seized with avidity by layman and savant alike, by choosing in his stead a flashy gentleman, widely known for his activities at track and ringside. Fear harried her. Perhaps, af-

ter all was said and done, she had committed a grave error in marrying rakish Johnny Fiske. But then—who could tell? Johnny was splendid company. Invariably he knew the fine points of every musical comedy in town. He was clever on the dance floor, and a past-master with the wine-list. He was lively, breezy; and spent his money as recklessly as his time. He never talked of living a humdrum existence on the side of a mountain.

Then, being in the unfrequent trend of self-analysis, Eleanor asked herself why she had rejected Hugh Barclay. The answer came readily, for she had framed it in her mind before. Hugh tired her with his philosophies. He was too immersed in his work. He was always at it: a book-worm, a fanatic.

(And she had made him that!)

"I liked him," she whispered in her old thoughtless, perverted way, "I liked him better as a careless dreamer."

There her analysis ceased. Yet, she cared

more for Hugh than she would admit, even to herself. She felt the spell of him. She recognized his solidity. She tried to shut her eyes to these things, but they crept in in spite of her. She met them with the desperate argument that John James and she would have good times together . . . but always the fear was there, and sometimes a heartache, for Eleanor was beginning to learn. . . .

She heard a sound. She looked up.

"We must play a game," Allan Scott was saying. "We must lead 'Clay to believe that you are still a part of his life. Do you think you are equal to the task, Mrs. Fiske?"

"I'll do my best—my very best," murmured Eleanor.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### HOMEWARD BOUND

Hugh was throwing a few necessaries into a suitcase, which lay open on the bed, when Scott came into the room.

"There's a train at three, and another at five-ten," said Allan. "The agent advised taking the five-ten. It's an express."

"You bought my ticket?"

"Yes; here it is."

"Thanks, old fellow. I'll leave on the five-ten."

Nodding, Scott went out of the room and down into the store. He realized that Barclay would much prefer being alone.

Hugh continued with his packing. There was not much order to it. Certain articles of clothing went to the bottom when they should

have gone on top. His thoughts were in a whirl.

So death had come to Jim Montana! The news, crashing down upon Hugh without a hint of its approach, seemed incredible. It grieved him, for there had always existed a real bond of friendship between the Arizonian and his Indian helper. Jim had both fathered and mothered him since the days of his infancy. He could not forget. . . .

And now Jim was no more, the destined time for his transition having come and gone. The forces that had animated him had returned to the world of forces. The mechanism of the man himself lay in its mountain home: a discharged storage battery awaiting that redistribution of current that comes with the ages and once again makes living things of those that are called dead.

Hugh snapped the clasps of his suitcase, dully aware that he had completed a haphazard job, yet not caring particularly. His mind

was full of other things. He thought of the goblet, of his unknown mother, of his own life. And there was always the undercurrent thought of Jim. Then, too, several important duties awaited performance in what remained of the afternoon; they must not be forgotten. Allan must be instructed to turn over certain manuscripts and proof sheets to Herman Elder, so as to insure the appearance of at least two more issues of Thought. Barclay believed he would be back in town before it became necessary to prepare copy for a third issue. Besides, he wasn't worrying about the magazine. Herman Elder was too much of a business man to see the publication go smash. If necessary, Doctor Puggleby might be engaged to edit Thought for awhile. And that reminded him: the diminutive professor must be informed of his, Hugh's, suddenly projected trip. He would ask Allan to phone.

And then, Eleanor. . . .

The day had been sultry, and the skies over-

cast with ominous clouds. Owing to the abstraction that enveloped him, Hugh had failed to note these signs of storm, and not until a streak of lightning flamed through his opened window and chased the shadows from their corners, did he take cognizance of the weather.

Thunder rumbled heavily from the West. A fitful, ever-increasing breeze played about the housetops. Without exactly knowing why, or caring, the Arizonian made added haste about the performance of his duties.

Two-thirty o'clock found him in the garage ordering Henry, the gas man, to "fill the tank," and flipping him a coin, as usual. While there, the rain commenced its patter on the roof.

Ten minutes later he was standing on the wide front step of Eleanor Gage's home, thumbing a push-button.

The butler saw him in.

Eleanor greeted him tenderly and allowed herself to be taken in his arms and kissed.

"I am going away, dear," he said.

"Going away?" she pouted. "Where?"

He told her. She feigned surprise.

"Poor boy," sighed the little blonde. She pushed him gently into an arm chair. "And you leave this afternoon—on the five-ten? May I go with you to the station?"

"I meant to ask you to see me off. Will you?"

"Certainly, Hugh. What a silly question!"

They were quiet for a moment or two. Then Barclay said:

"I would like to take you with me on the five-ten. But I—I suppose that is quite impossible—"

"Quite impossible," echoed the peacock. Her voice was a trifle unsteady. She reached out a slim, white hand and laid it on his arm. "Perhaps—"

He took her hand in both of his and petted it awkwardly. "Yes?" he queried. "Perhaps —what, dear?"

Eleanor withdrew her hand. "Please, Hugh —let's not make this parting so difficult. We shall see each other again—soon."

"Yes, of course. Forgive me. I had no intention of saddening you." He arose and strolled restlessly to the window and back, hands clasped behind him.

Lightning flashed in the room, whitening it. And the crash of thunder that followed reverberated through the house. Trembling, Eleanor started to her feet.

"I—I am—so afraid of thunder," she gasped.

Hugh opened his arms to her. Imperceptibly, she paused, then went reluctantly into them. The rain swirled viciously against door and window.

"It's ominous—ominous. Oh, I hate these summer storms!" Eleanor shuddered and instantly felt those long, lean arms tighten around her. "Do you really care for me, Hugh?" She stirred uneasily as she ques-

tioned him. The deception was no longer a game: it had become a torture. She felt that at any moment the secret might escape her.

"Care for you? God in heaven, I love you, I idolize you. Can you doubt it?" He bowed his head over hers . . . their lips met.

The afternoon was fast waning when Barclay and the peacock hurried down the broad front steps and into Hugh's waiting motor car. It was still raining: a steady, dreary downfall.

They rolled through the almost deserted streets in silence; and, at length, turning a corner, found themselves on the wood-blocked Avenue. Hugh threw out clutch and applied brakes. The machine came to a stop directly in front of the Scott Galleries.

A gloomy little group composed of Olive, Doctor Puggleby, Mrs. Scott and Allan dawdled within doors, waiting anxiously for the Arizonian to appear. Allan, being the first to note the gray car's approach, ran out

with an umbrella in his hand, and escorted the couple to cover.

Hugh was surprised to find Doctor Puggleby on hand. It touched him, too,—to think the science professor cared. . . .

Greetings were exchanged in low tones. Even Puggleby made the effort and succeeded in modulating his great, Johnsonesque voice. It was much like a gathering of mourners.

Hugh busied himself with adieus. Motherly Mrs. Scott, winking behind her glasses drew him aside, and, giving way to a sudden impulse, kissed him on the forehead.

Olive Henderson's good-bye was almost inaudible. Barclay turned from her to Doctor Puggleby, hand extended. But the bristling, bearded pedagogue waved him aside.

"I am going with you to the station, sir," he explained, in his precise way. "Allan is to drive. I will sit beside him. You and Miss Gage in back, of course. You see, we have it all arranged."

"But Mrs. Scott—and—and Miss Henderson—"

"We're clerking in Allan's absence," Olive told him.

"Come," said Scott, seizing Hugh's suitcase.

Next the Westerner knew, he was seated in the tonneau of his car, and Olive and Allan's mother were waving good-bye from the door. He responded by lifting his hat; then turned and looked into the blue eyes beside him.

"We haven't many more minutes together," he whispered, and drew her closer to him. A moment later he was holding her hand and gazing, in that vaguely detached manner of his, out at the dull, drenched Avenue along which they proceeded.

Rain darted across the shining sidewalks like lines of magnetic force. Wax figures in clothing store windows bestowed their fixed and cheerless smiles upon a vacant street. All the world was dreary. . . .

"When do you expect to get back here?" Eleanor's voice broke the silence.

"I—I should say within six weeks—or perhaps two months," guessed the man. "The sooner the better, of course; although there are many little—and maybe a few big things—to clear up. I feel it."

They talked, then, of the West; of the desert called Shippau, which he must cross; of Jim Montana; and of the bungalow on the mountainside. But of the silver goblet that was his father's, Hugh said nothing.

The car came to an easy, gliding stop, and Barclay, peering through the murky atmosphere, discerned the handsome stone structure of the Consolidated Railways Terminal.

Presently the little party of four found itself in the high-ceilinged waiting room, and, later, under the great dome of the trainshed, where Doctor Puggleby—pompous and officious, as always, despite his diminutiveness—

held converse with a burly gateman, relative to the departure of Barclay's train.

It was now five o'clock. Arc lamps spread their white radiance throughout the trainshed. Throngs of hurrying commuters jostled one another in the usual early evening scramble to get home. The bellowing voice of the announcer sounded at frequent intervals. To Hugh it seemed nothing was more typical of the ant-like existence of the city dweller than this.

The Western express was taking on passengers—had been for twenty minutes or more. So they passed through the iron gate leading to track 12, and in single file, headed by Eleanor and brought up in the rear by Allan and the suitcase, clambered aboard. They progressed forward into the parlor car.

Very few words had passed between Eleanor and Allan Scott since their casual greeting back there in the Galleries; and Hugh, hazily aware of this fact, and desirous, also, of hav-

ing his supposed fiancee escorted homeward in the motor, directed a low-toned request at his antiquarian friend.

"You'll drive Miss Gage home, after the train has left, won't you, Allan?"

"Certainly, Hugh."

"Good. And Allan, listen: I want you to use the car as often as you please while I am away. It is half yours when I am around, you know, and all yours when I am not. Promise."

"I promise."

The final handshaking began. Everyone tried to be bluff, hearty, cheerful, but it was a sad moment, and one by one pretences fell away. Doctor Puggleby's roaring voice sank low and mournful. Allan's suddenly simulated flippancy died from lack of inward encouragement. And Eleanor wavered on the edge of confession.

It was over shortly. Without protest, and in the presence of a score or more smiling pas-

sengers, Hugh took the girl he loved in his arms and kissed her. The hissing signal to start was given. Bells clanged. Friends scurried away; and the Westerner found himself alone in the green-carpeted aisle.

The train was gaining momentum. He went to the window, straining for another look at her. Crowded though the platform was, his eyes readily found what they sought. Eleanor, a wisp of golden hair peeping from under her hat, was standing a few paces in front of Allan and Doctor Puggleby—waving a frilly handkerchief at the parlor car of the overland express. . . .

And then a curving track, and she was lost to him.

Hugh sat in his Pullman chair, chin on palm, gazing out the window. The Western express was rushing through the city, jangling across open switches and missing long strings of motionless freight trains by what seemed to be mere fractions of an inch. Signal lights—red,

green, yellow—dotted the maze of tracks and shone through the gray gloom like so many winking goblin eyes. Mills and warehouses flashed by. Rickety frame houses coated with smoke and soot projected themselves momentarily on the vision. In one of these the housewife had no doubt forgotten to remove a heap of bed-clothes from the sill, where they had been placed for airing. The white sheets flapped a ghost-like greeting through the drizzle, and were gone. Acres of housetops spread away on all sides. Chimneys, church spires, and an occasional tree popping up between streets, alone provided relief from monotony.

So began the journey home.

Somewhere in New Mexico a couple of sheep ranchers boarded the train. Hugh, who was lonely, sought conversation with them.

One of the men said: "Where you from?"

"I've been living in the East," returned Barclay.

"What part o' the East?"

Hugh told him.

"Aw, you're no big-city chap. Leastways, you don't look it," cut in the second fellow. "I'll bet my new Stetson you warn't born in the East."

"A safe bet," remarked the Arizonian.

"I knew it. You've got 'open air' writ all over you. Even your faded out complexion didn't fool me any. I know a Westerner when I see one, believe me."

Hugh was gratified. He liked to be identified with life in the open.

"I was born out yonder," he nodded toward the Rockies. "On the edge of the desert they call Shippau—twenty-five miles northwest of Red Dog. Do you know the country?"

"Never been out there myself," confessed the first sheep man. "But I met a cow-puncher a couple o' weeks ago whose opinion o' that there desert warn't fit to print. Him and his pards got caught in a sand storm and

it raised blue blazes with 'em. This chap's face was all scarred up. Said it felt like raw beefsteak. And as for his innards—whew! The alkali dust is still circulatin' in his system. Why, if they hadn't been near a town, they'd been croaked, he said."

"What about the railroad? Hasn't it sent its proposed spur across the desert?"

"Nix. They're still talkin' about it."

The journey was nearing its end. Even to Hugh, whose thoughts were mostly elsewhere, there was something distinctly and strangely final about it all. Dust-coated cactus bushes sprung up along the track. The horizon flattened, became a straight line. The sun glared hotly from a clouded sky.

At Eagleshead, a tiny town that slept on the Eastern fringe of the great Shippau desert, Barclay was the only passenger to leave the train. Suitcase in hand, he stepped to the station platform, aware now that he was among familiar scenes.

## MIRAGE

Desert silence brooded over the shack-like town. Less than half a dozen people were in sight. The station agent dozed in his chair. An Indian child, quite naked, played nearby.

It was here that Hugh secured a broncho and started westward over the vast sea of sand.

# CHAPTER XXVIII

## THE MAN AND THE MIRAGE

The man drew rein. Through eyes that burned with the desert's reflected heat, he scanned the horizon—an unbroken white line in the distance. He muttered something unintelligible.

So, after forty-eight hours of helpless wandering, he must admit the fact which, from veritable dread of the thing, he had denied! He was lost.

The fact in itself was of a sufficiently startling nature to result in a demonstration of feeling; but the man felt, as he often felt, that repressive tendency which came to his father —or perhaps his mother, and he sat his lean little broncho with a stolidness that amounted, outwardly, to indifference.

## MIRAGE

Not a sound—not even the breathing of gentle air currents—disturbed the desert silence. Heat waves danced in the rarefied atmosphere. The sun, a circle of flame on high, burned malignantly upon the arid plain and its lone human occupant.

The man bowed his head, seeking thus to escape the rays that already had seared his eyelids and blackened his skin. His thoughts wandered. "If heat is the principal constituent of the lower regions, then I am already in a typical orthodox hell," he babbled to himself. And then he laughed—or tried to laugh; for he wanted to forget the pain that stabbed at his eyeballs.

Regarding his situation, he felt quite helpless—much as though he were in an open boat at sea with neither chart nor compass to guide him, and with the larder empty. Whimsically, he turned and joggled his canteen. No sound came from within—no pleasant lapping to assure him that a few drops of the precious

fluid remained. Still, he offered no complaint, but sat, immobile, on the broncho's back.

Earlier in the day he had seen the dried-out skull of an ox, and a rib or two, half buried in the sand by the side of a cactus bush. Vaguely, he wondered. . . .

He raised his head, and leaned forward: in listening attitude. The light that comes with delirium sparkled in his deep, black eyes.

"Eleanor!" he cried. "Eleanor!" And turned in his saddle.

"Good lord, little girl!" Astonishment and joy merged in his thickening voice. "How—? Where—? Oh, but I'm glad!"

What he believed he heard pleased him. He laughed.

"You don't mean to say you've been following me all the way from Eagleshead? Dear, you are the most wonderful girl—"

He reached out an arm to encircle her waist. It encountered—nothing. But he was not aware that it encountered nothing.

"A kiss, dear—just one. I'll not ask another," he pleaded. Then: "You brought water? . . . No? . . . And I so thirsty! . . . There, there! Don't cry. We may find Red Dog before the day is done. There's still a chance. . . . ."

The man closed his eyes; but opened them a moment later. "You know, Jim's dead," he mumbled. "Jim went back to join his larger self. I wonder why people have an aversion to that sort of thing? . . . Do you think, perhaps. . . . No, no. . . . I know. I've felt it myself. It's this idea of having to quit the crowd. And yet, the real fact is: Jim hasn't quit the crowd; he has just gone to join the crowd. Allan agrees with me. Do you, Eleanor? . . . I knew you would. . . . And I want you to see the car. You can hear the exhaust fully seventeen blocks away. . . ."

He lurched sleepily: forward, then back. His heel scraped the broncho's belly, and the

little animal, mistaking the touch for a signal, started off through the sand.

The man fell to muttering. "To become the —to become the living embodiment of a philosophy requires—to become the—requires years. . . . Not one generation, but many. Time is the bulwark of evolution. Time is the bulwark. . . . What is to be, will be."

Again silence. The horse plodded on.

At length the little animal, feeling the reins slap limply and meaninglessly around his neck, came to a full stop, and thoughtfully lowered his head, and drowsed under the influence of the desert sun.

The man looked up, startled. Low in the sky at which he stared appeared a mirage.

"A water-hole!" he cried. "By God, yes—a water-hole, and shade trees—"

He dug his heels in the horse's ribs. Weakly, he slapped the animal's neck, urging it onward. Hope had come again. He licked his lips.

Now they were racing at a great pace over the gray-white sand. Cactus bushes, all but their spines covered with the desert dust, fled by. Grotesquely shaped islands of rock sprung out of the path ahead, only to recede and disappear in clouds of powdery alkali that rose from beneath the horse's hoofs and drifted backward.

During that brief interval, the man felt again his old interest in things. He loved his life—and would continue loving it, and fighting for it—to the end.

But the water-hole and the trees that shaded it drew no nearer. Already the mirage had grown dim; and, even as he looked, it faded, and there was presented once more an unbroken landscape: drab, desolate.

The man knew now that the desert he loved had tricked him. A sigh escaped through his blackened lips. He closed his eyes to protect them from the sun.

The horse and the man, like the cactus

bushes which they passed, were shrouded in a film of dust. They had the appearance of phantoms on a pilgrimage across God's waste places—a pilgrimage without destination.

Far off, on the fringe of the desert, a spiral of dust projected itself into the air. Very tiny at first, it grew gradually larger, until it seemed to cover several miles of horizon. The dead air stirred. A weak wind arose.

The man, opening his eyes at infrequent intervals, noted these changes. Knowing perfectly well what they meant, he never dwelt upon them for any considerable length of time, but lowered his lids again and quietly accepted the crumb of relief that came of blotting out the scene.

The horse, foam-flecked, panting, continued on a slow trot, until, according to the working of nature's law, animal and rider drew in sight of the town called Red Dog. Small, one-story shacks rose up from the desert carpet like toy Noah's Ark. The saloon and its twin

brother for pretentiousness, the general store, offered cool interiors—protection from the sun and sand. A herd of six or eight emaciated cows was being driven down the main street by a little, barefooted boy with a switch in his hand. The town itself was enjoying a siesta.

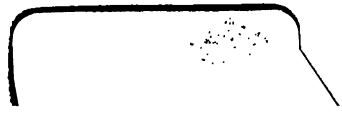
Rousing himself, the man saw the saloon, and the cluster of huts, and the cattle. He looked long and earnestly at all this, absorbing every detail. "It looks real," he whispered. "But this old horse of mine is quite done up chasing the other one, and—well, the Moquis of Red Dog were right, I guess. What is to be, will be. . . ."

And true to his inborn capacity for being led astray, he resigned himself when his deliverance was nearest at hand.

His voice died away in a discouraged mumble as he reined the horse about and faced the open desert. The animal, against desire and intuition, moved faithfully onward—out into the path of the approaching sand storm. It

was the end; the time for another transition had arrived.

The man turned in his saddle and gazed at what he considered an apparition of Red Dog.

"Damn!" he said. "Damn—"

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